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Sayat`-Nova:

Within the Near Eastern bardic tradition and posthumous

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the  
degree Doctor of Philosophy in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures

by

Xi Yang

2016

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Sayat`-Nova:

Within the Near Eastern bardic tradition and posthumous

by

Xi Yang

Doctor of Philosophy in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Professor Peter S. Cowe, Chair

*AšuĤ/aşık/aşıq* (from the Arabic *‘āshiq*, or lover) is a skilled bard's composite performing art-- a unity of prose narrations, songs, instrumental accompaniment, and appropriate gesture. Of sixteenth-century Turkic origin, the art spread over a vast area covering modern Turkey, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran, and further. In the mid-eighteenth century Sayat`-Nova, the best-known Armenian *aşuĤ*, was active in Tiflis (modern Tbilisi), the capital of Eastern Georgia. His songs were written in at least three languages--Armenian, Georgian and Azerbaijani--and won praise for their ardent emotion and artistic perfection. But despite his importance in Near Eastern culture, two issues in Sayat`-Nova studies have rarely been studied. First, fully appreciating Sayat`-Nova requires contextualizing his work within the developing



Armenian aşuİ tradition and the international aşuİ/aşık/aşiq tradition in the Near East.

Second, the history of Sayat`-Nova studies as a field and its growing popularity in relation to twentieth-century Armenian nationalism and Soviet cultural policies demands attention as well.

Focusing on these neglected issues will enable a richer understanding of Sayat`-Nova's place in the history of the aşuİ/aşık/aşiq tradition as well as his relation to the elevated poetic traditions in South Caucasia, the Armenian aşuİs' contribution within the broader matrix of the early modern Turkic aşık/aşiq tradition, and the evolution of a distinct aşuİ tradition in the Armenian language. At the same time, exploring his posthumous adoption as a cultural icon will provide insight into the history of scholarship and of mass culture both in South Caucasia and for Armenians worldwide.

The dissertation of Xi Yang is approved.

Dominico Ingenito

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## Table of Contents

Explanation of terminology and the principles of transcription employed in this study .....	vi
Acknowledgements.....	x
Vita.....	xiii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter Breakdown .....	6
Chapter 1 .....	13
Chapter 2 .....	41
Chapter 3 .....	123
Chapter 4 .....	163
Chapter 5 .....	204
Chapter 6 .....	234
Epilogue .....	279
Appendices .....	282
Bibliography .....	287

## Explanation of terminology and the principles of transcription employed in this study

### A. Terminology

1. The *aşuġ/aşık/aşıq* tradition is essentially a type of bardic composition and performance widespread in the Near East from the sixteenth century onwards. This triple designation relates to the form of the term current in the three major languages in which it was disseminated, Armenian, Turkish, and Azeri. As a result, whenever the context is clear, it will be referred to as “bardic tradition” and the exponent as “bard” instead of “*aşuġ/aşık/aşıq*”. In most cases the term *aşuġ/aşık/aşıq* will be individualized to refer purely to ethnic Armenian/Turkish/Azerbaijani bards respectively.
2. The same considerations apply to related terms like *davt`ar/defter/dəftər* illustrating the variant forms in the three above languages to denote the notebook in which the bard or an associate inscribed the text of his songs, the triple term would be abbreviated such as “bardic notebook” whenever possible.
3. In this dissertation the terms Azerbaijan/Azerbaijani/Azeri are used without any political implications. “Azerbaijan” refers to both the territory of the current Republic of Azerbaijan (called “Tartary” in Russian in the nineteenth century) as well as the region in the Northwest of Iran, which bears this name from ancient times. “Azerbaijani” as a noun refers to the Turkic inhabitants of both territories mentioned above in addition to those Turkic inhabitants who used to live, or still live in the Republic of Armenia and the mostly eastern and southern parts of the

Republic of Georgia, which belonged to the Persian Empire in the early modern period, since from Russian Imperial times onward these people are identified as “Azerbaijanis”. As an adjective, “Azerbaijani” pertains to the Azerbaijanis. “Azeri” refers to the Turkic language spoken by the “Azerbaijanis” as defined above.

4. In the context of the early modern period, the toponym Armenia refers to the area of historical Armenia on the Armenian Plateau. From 1918 to the present it refers to the Republic of Armenia, regardless of its political affiliation.
5. The term Armeno-Turkish *aşuġ* refers to those ethnic Armenian *aşuġs* who composed in a Turkic language or dialect.
6. Armeno-Azeri refers to the convention of Armenian *aşuġs*, all of whom till now lived in the former Iranian sphere, of employing the Armenian script to render their Turkic compositions, where the dialect shows more affinity with modern literary Azeri than modern standard Turkish. For example, it is appropriate to refer to Sayat`-Nova’s Turkic songs as being recorded in this script. This designation is preferable to classifying such songs as “Turkish” or “Armeno-Turkish”, since the orthography of these songs reflects the local Azeri dialect.

## B. Principles of Transliteration

Where toponyms have a widely accepted English form that will be followed. Therefore “Yerevan” is preferred over “Erevan”, “Moscow” over “Moskva”, “Tehran” over “Tihrān”, etc.

For Armenian, Georgian, Russian, and Ukrainian the Library of Congress system of transliteration is followed with the following exceptions:

1. Monographs on Armenian Studies published in Western languages are cited according to their existing Romanized versions. Similarly, where authors have a preferred spelling of their names in Latin script, those are retained.
2. Transliteration of book titles or quotations follow the orthography of the original printed form. The names of authors from Soviet and post-Soviet countries are uniformly transliterated according to the reformed orthography.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, “Hovhannes T`umanyan” will appear instead of “Yovhannēs T`umanean”.
3. Exceptions to principles 1 and 2:
  - A. The name of the focal figure of this dissertation is uniformly spelled as Sayat`-Nova in the main text outside of quotations.
  - B. The famous Soviet Armenian film director’s name will be spelled uniformly as Sergei Parajanov as has become accepted in English.
  - C. As explained in chapter 2, keeping a davt`ar/defter/dəftər, or hand-written notebook of songs, is the common practice for bards. To distinguish Sayat`-Nova’s songbook it appears as Davt`ar with initial capital.

In Russian transliteration, for the sake of simplicity, the ligature tie above two-letter tie

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<sup>1</sup> There was an orthographical reform in Soviet Armenia in 1922, and its revision in 1940. It seems that the major purpose for the reform was its “colloquialization” at the cost of classical, etymological spellings. Therefore, letters *ē* and *ō* were abolished, substituted by *e* and *o* as monophthongs; or as diphthongs *ēa*, *ēo* and *ēi*, substituted by *eya*, *eyo* and *eyi*. Letters *e* and *o*, when pronounced as *ye* and *vo* at the initial position, were written as *ye* and *vo*. Diphthongs *ea* and *eo* were replaced by *ya* and *yo*. Diphthong *ow* is reserved only for vowel *u*; while its pronunciation as *v* was replaced by the monophthong *v*. Diphthong *iw* was replaced by *yu*. Diphthong *oy* was replaced by *uy*, unchanged only when it was pronounced as *oy*. The initial *y* was replaced by *h* wherever it is pronounced as *h*; while the final silent *y* was abolished. The 1940 revision can be regarded as a partial retreat from the 1922 reform, in which *ē* and *ō* were reintroduced in the initial position (including etymologically initial position) and a few words; initial *ye* and *vo* were again written as *e* and *o*; and glide *y* was only written across morpheme boundary with *a/o* and *i*, particularly in inflection. See: Jasmine Dum-Tragut: *Armenian. Modern Eastern Armenian*, London Oriental and African Language Library, vol. 14, John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, 2009, p. 12.

characters is omitted.

Transliterations of Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman follow the system of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES).

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Turkish, and Prof. Emer. Ralph Jaeckel, Senior Lecturer Emeritus of Turkic. All the persons listed above have answered a number of my questions during my dissertation writing.

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237

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past century and a half scholarship on Sayat'-Nova has significantly advanced our knowledge of the bard and his life and works. These advances include defining the elusive beauty in his songs who led to his downfall from court as Princess Anna, sister of King Erekle II. Similarly, many characteristic features of his compositional mode have been isolated, such as formal multiplicity, innovative tropes, and the deep sincerity of emotion expressed in his songs. Nevertheless, taken as a whole, studies to date appear impressionistic in their conclusions and are marked by a lack of comprehensiveness in methodology and coverage, which inevitably raises questions about the accuracy of their results.

One of the most serious theoretical gaps is the wide spread lack of a systematic definition of what constitutes bardic literature and lends it its integrity as a distinct genre clearly distinguished from folksong at one extreme and elite types of poetry on the other. As indicated in the following literature review, studies in both the former Soviet Union and Turkey tend to subsume bardic compositions under the general rubric of folk literature. However, they differ essentially from genres like folksong, riddles, and folk tales according to a number of categories. Though bardic songs are composed in a rather colloquial register, this should be distinguished from the dialectal forms typical of folklore. In most cases, they are the product of professionally trained bards, who usually inscribe them in their notebooks (daftar in Persian, borrowed directly into Turkish as defter) in contrast to genres of folk literature, which are orally composed and

transmitted and continually evolve within untrained collectives, thus lacking any specific authorship. Similarly, with regard to audience, bardic songs are normally performed in urban environments, sometimes in an ambience of high social status, while folksongs derive from a village setting in which most of those present participate in some fashion. It is also important to differentiate bardic compositions from works of elite literature, which also constitutes a distinct tradition whose parameters must be respected. Unfortunately, these issues have not received sufficient attention in bardic studies in general and evens less in the case of Sayat`-Nova.<sup>1</sup>

A further problem with Turkic and Armenian scholarship in this field is their tendency to research the tradition purely from one ethnic or linguistic perspective, rather than as an organic whole. This narrow viewpoint undermines the integrity of the domain, which by definition is international. It is only once we gain a clearer understanding of the movement as a whole that we can accurately distinguish the specific characteristics any of its subfields may exhibit.

An extension of the above problem is that both Turkic and Armenian research has borrowed the term “school” from modern literary and artistic coteries pursuing common aesthetic principles and applied it loosely to their own field as a means of distinguishing bards from the same city or region. Thus, from Garegin Levonyan on, Armenian scholars have distinguished at least three major “schools” of early modern Armenian aşuġs according to their geographical distributions and the languages in which they

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<sup>1</sup> Quite a few Armenian and Turkish scholars, e.g., Garegin Levonyan, Pertev Naili Boratav, had taken notice of this distinction. Unfortunately, this initiative is not well continued. Later, Armenian scholars more often treat Armenian aşuġ tradition as a continuation of early medieval Armenian gusan tradition, and a kind of folk literature; while in Turkey, the aşık study is often carried out by folklorists.

composed.<sup>2</sup> This, however, dilutes the sense of close affiliation in principles, programs, styles, etc. in employing the term merely to denote parallels in geography, ethnicity, or language.<sup>3</sup> It is impossible to estimate the significance of any subfields in the discipline before an effective comparative study of the bards of various nations in West Asia is made. Therefore, comparisons between Armenian and Turkic bards' works are essential, in which Armenian songs by Armenian *aşuflar*, Turkish songs by Armenian *aşuflar* (also known as Armeno-Turkish *aşık* songs), and Turkish/Azeri songs by Turkic *aşık/aşıqs* are analyzed altogether. This then provides a foundation for a more in-depth evaluation of the oeuvre of Sayat'-Nova, who composed in both Armenian and Azeri.

The rather unsystematic and impressionistic approach which has partly typified general studies of the bardic tradition is also observable in discussions of Sayat'-Nova, especially with regard to his identity as an *aşuflar*. Though nobody denies his being an *aşuflar*, many monographs dedicated to him (for example, Suren Harut'unyan's *Ergi hançarē Sayat'-Nova* and Xoren Sargsyan's *Sayat'-Nova*), lack detailed discussion about the impact of his training or *aşuflar* features in his songs. At the same time, many collections of Armenian *aşuflar* songs from the Soviet era entirely exclude Sayat'-Nova. Only Hasmik Sahakyan has a discussion in which Sayat'-Nova is more involved in the introduction to her *Hay aşufler XVII-XVIII dd.*<sup>4</sup> Apart from the one exception of comparing Sayat'-Nova with Naḡaṣ Yovnat'an, the famous Tiflis Armenian *aşuflar* of the early eighteenth century, whom many regard as Sayat'-Nova's forerunner,<sup>5</sup> Sayat'-

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<sup>2</sup> Levonyan, 1944, pp. 34-45.

<sup>3</sup> An example of such misusage might be found in: Həkimov, 2006, pp. 188-194.

<sup>4</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 49-59.

<sup>5</sup> For example, in the preface to Č'opanean, 1906, pp. 12-18; Hovhannes T'umanyan also has an article

Nova's aşuġ identity is largely overlooked.

That Sayat`-Nova is rarely contextualized in a bardic matrix also has further implications. In many monographs, he is treated more as a well-educated, elite poet, whose works are written in an elevated literary language for an elite readership, rather than as an aşuġ composing in an idiom closer to the spoken language for oral performance to a wider audience. This has inevitably led to numerous comparisons and parallels drawn between Sayat`-Nova and famous poets, from East to West, often based on superficial external similarities in images or tropes rather than an in-depth analysis of the given authors and their ambience. Similarly, Dowsett's comparisons of Sayat`-Nova with Provençal troubadours of the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries<sup>6</sup> do not take into consideration the major differences in period, situation, and conventions between these two traditions. Even fewer comparisons have been made between Sayat`-Nova and comparable Turkic aşık/aşıqs of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, or internal comparison of Sayat`-Nova's different styles in different languages (Armenian, Azeri, Georgian).<sup>7</sup>

In view of the above, the current dissertation sets about correcting this oversight by contextualizing Sayat`-Nova in the development of the bardic tradition in early modern West Asia, comparing his works first and foremost with contemporary bards,

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on Love in Naġaş Yovnat`an, Nahapet K`uġ`ak and Sayat`-Nova's works; see: T`umanyan, 1963, pp. 15-19.

<sup>6</sup> For example, with twelfth-century troubadour Bernard de Ventadorn: Dowsett, 1997, pp.133-134.

<sup>7</sup> There is only one parallel between Azerbaijani Abbas Tufarġanlı and Sayat`-Nova's respective one "name sake" song *Bəyənəməz* (*Unlovable*), see: Yerevanlı, 1958, pp. 498-500. But this "name sake" is only based on Tufarġanlı's Azeri original and Araslı's Azeri translation of Sayat`-Nova's Georgian original. Only in Bakhch`inyan 1988 there is a bit more discussion about the great aşuġ's own diversity of styles in different language compositions; but with few comparison.

both Armenian and Turkic, before considering his possible affinities with elite Armenian, Perso-Turkic, and Georgian poetry.

Although the many collections, monographs, and articles published deal with various aspects of Sayat`-Nova's life and works, none treats another important aspect of the poet's legacy, the process by which he rose from relative obscurity in the early nineteenth century to become a cultural icon in the twentieth century, the contours of the process largely depending on a range of changing socio-political factors. These impacted both scholarly activities as well as much wider cultural manifestations in Armenia, Southern Caucasia, and the Soviet Union in general, depending on the period. This dissertation therefore seeks to remedy the current lack of a study on the ideological impetus behind cultural activities relating to Sayat`-Nova and the impact of these activities in both academia and society at large.



## Chapter Breakdown

### Chapter 1: Literature Review

This chapter introduces the dissertation's core figure and the issues he raises for an understanding of the bardic tradition of composition and performance he represents. It begins by reviewing the current state of Sayat`-Nova scholarship, outlining the important advances made in clarifying aspects of his biography and chronology and the collection and publishing of his songs before drawing attention to important areas that have received less detailed coverage, which are explored here as a basis for an orderly discussion of more specific problems taken up in the subsequent chapters.

### Chapter 2: The bardic Tradition and Sayat`-Nova's Profile

This chapter constructs a general outline of the characteristics of the bardic tradition that evolved in Anatolia and Caucasia in the early modern period associated with the term *aşuġ/aşık/aşiq* (lover), of which Sayat`-Nova is an exponent, and to assess the degree to which his training and professional activities are representative of the genre as a whole. This chapter thus lays the theoretical basis for the discussion of Sayat`-Nova's poetic output in next chapters.

The chapter opens with an overview of the evolution of the bardic genre in our region both in Turkic and Armenian from the sixteenth century until the end of the eighteenth century. Its findings underscore the international character of the movement and its development.

On the basis of previous studies, the next section sets about establishing the parameters of the bardic tradition widely typical of this geographical and historical sphere with regard to the primary categories of training, professional lifestyle, ambience, performance structure and venue, audience, etc. In so doing it will address features such as the master-pupil relationship and associated conventions such as the authenticating dream which preceded the apprentice's graduation, the interrelation between the two aspects of bardic performance, the *hikâye* or prose narrative, which was mainly composed orally, and the subgenres of song marked by a diversity of themes, styles, and prosody performed to stringed accompaniment. Attention is also paid to conventions like competitions in which bards were called upon to display their skills in extempore performance. Finally, the question is examined as to whether ethnic Armenian bards exhibit any common features that distinguish them as a subgroup within the broader matrix.

The chapter also provides a clear classification of the contrastive paradigms reflected by the aşık tradition and folklore supported by an array of examples from Anatolia and Caucasia in this period. That is followed by a comparative review of the key elements of Sayat`-Nova's biography from his aşuġ training to his admission to the Georgian court to corroborate the bard's characteristic and distinctive features as an exponent of this art form.

Chapter 3: Sayat`-Nova's Armeno-Azeri compositions in the general context of sixteenth to eighteenth centuries bardic literature

As the previous chapter concentrates on external characteristics, the next three focus on the internal evidence of Sayat`-Nova's songs in Azeri, Armenian, and Georgian, situating the first two within the bardic matrix and the third within the parameters of elite literary transmission. Building on previous research, Chapter 3 opens with a more detailed classification of *aşuġ* composition, followed by a more thorough overview of Armeno-Turkic *aşuġ* compositions. It then examines the possible existence of common traits distinguishing an Armenian subgroup within the wider matrix, and the emerging paradigm is employed to define the profile of Sayat`-Nova's Azeri songs in terms of their characteristic and more distinctive features.

#### Chapter 4: Sayat`-Nova's Armenian composition in the context of sixteenth to eighteenth centuries bardic literature

This chapter situates Sayat`-Nova's Azeri songs within the context of the Turkic *aşık* tradition and investigates the place of the bard's Armenian songs within the evolving early modern Armenian *aşuġ* tradition. This involves analyzing the parameters of the Armenian corpus in relation to the Turkic paradigm in terms of its formal characteristics, incorporating in the selection works of early modern ethnic Armenian *aşuġ*s composing both in Turkic and Armenian like Sayat`-Nova and others writing only in their mother tongue, such as Łul Egaz, Amir Oġli, Yart`un Ōġli, Şamč`i-Melk`o, etc. The necessity of this approach is predicated on the unevenness of previous research where discussion is limited to only one linguistic tradition or the other. The resulting framework is then used to define Sayat`-Nova's profile in the Armenian domain also,

noting those aspects in continuity with the larger group as well as those facets which distinguish him from that norm. Several scholars have argued impressionistically that the latter are to be interpreted as innovations on his part. The more systematic investigation undertaken here then clarifies the accuracy of that assessment.

Chapter 5: Sayat`-Nova, the sixteenth to eighteenth century Armenian *aṣuṭ* tradition, and elite poetic traditions of the area

This chapter explores the level of affinity Sayat`-Nova and other sixteenth to eighteenth century Armenian *aṣuṭ*s bear with the contemporary elite Perso-Turkic, Armenian, and Georgian poetic registers, as commented upon by scholars like Paruyr Sevak or Henrik Baxč`inyan with regard to the first and Ėubēn Abrahamean in connection with the second.

Granted the enormous impact Persian lyric exerted throughout the medieval Near East and the range of influences on medieval Armenian verse documented by Č`ugaszyan and others, and the specific parallels Abrahamean has pinpointed between Sayat`-Nova and Persian poets, this chapter first engages with this element of the bard's work, trying to distinguish the precise categories represented (direct citations, themes, imagery, etc.). Similarly, possible impacts from elevated Turkic poetry, be it Ottoman *divan* poetry or classical Azeri poetry, are also explored.

Then the often impressionistic in-passing remarks found in earlier scholarship are subjected to a more comprehensive analysis first of the influence on Sayat`-Nova, and whenever possible, on other early modern Armenian *aṣuṭ*s, from the rich tradition of

classical Armenian lyric (*taġasac`ut`iwn*), whose practitioners were exclusively ecclesiastics of various ranks that had received varying degrees of education in a church or monastery. Though Sayat`-Nova is the most accomplished Armenian *ařuġ* from this period and arguably bears most influence from the elevated Perso-Turkic poetic traditions, it is important to contextualize that within Armenian *ařuġ*s' general trends in that period. This allows a proper evaluation of the smaller pool of Sayat`-Nova's themes within this larger cross section.

For the sake of completeness, the third section reviews the state of research on Sayat`-Nova's much smaller Georgian corpus which does not belong to the bardic style but to the distinct tradition of Georgian court poetry similarly under significant Persian influence that reflects the bard's position as a court poet of king Erekle II in the 1750s.

The final section integrates the results of previous analyses of Sayat`-Nova, combining his professional profile as bard with his characteristics as a composer of bardic verse in Azeri and Armenian and courtly verse in Georgian within the wider context of his varied external literary influences. This provides a more holistic sketch of this remarkable poet's achievements set against the diversity of the cultural landscape of his native city Tiflis in the Early Modern period.

## Chapter 6: Sayat`-Nova's Posthumous Status as a Cultural Icon

The final chapter tracks the transformation of the poet's identity and significance for contemporaries under the impact of competing modern ideologies on the bard and his output and their evaluation first of all in Southern Caucasus and then Eurasia in the

course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Whereas Sayat`-Nova's legacy seems to have been forgotten by the early decades of the nineteenth century, a German-style Romantic Nationalism expanding in Russian Transcaucasia impelled ethnographers to collect his works along with elements of folklore in the 1840s, thus already at that time combining two very different literary genres, which were now perceived as receptacles of 'national culture'. In contrast, the infusion of international socialist projects in Transcaucasia in the second half of the century paved the way for Armenian and Georgian interest in materials of the polyglot bard in those two languages in the early years of the twentieth century.

Under the Soviet period the chapter focuses on the bard's appreciation first as a representative of the laity rather than being an ecclesiastic like most early and medieval Armenian writers. However, it seeks to interpret the unprecedented explosion of scholarly production on him in parallel with various more popular manifestations (literature, namings of streets, cultural and artistic groups etc., paintings, statues, films, etc.) in the Khrushchev period as a reflection of the policy of *Druzhba Narodov* (Friendship of Peoples) designed to stem separatist tendencies in the Southern Caucasian republics after the failure of Stalin's policy of unification. His dwelling in Tiflis and composing in all three languages of the region rendered him an ideal figure to symbolize this ideal of harmony and cooperation while still acknowledging the distinctiveness of the three main peoples there. Most of the publications, tangible or visual monuments to him, which are still visible today, date from that period. This explains the striking output of scholars in Georgia and Azerbaijan in this period, which

is unparalleled either before or since.

In contrast, the chapter argues that it was precisely the recrudescence of nationalism in the USSR in the 1980s, which significantly contributed to the downfall of the Soviet edifice that led to an almost complete neglect in Georgia and total disregard for the poet in Azerbaijan. In Armenia, in contrast, despite the gradual marginalization of the aşık tradition beginning in the mid-century, Sayat`-Nova's popular significance has continued to expand into the independent republic with ever new performances and CD releases of his songs, films and plays retracing his life, and new approaches to interpreting his works. The chapter is of particular importance in providing a context within which to view several of the scholarly positions taken in the literature.

## Chapter 1

### Literature Review

#### Section 1 Review of scholarship on Sayat`-Nova

Under this general title several categories and subcategories should be distinguished. The first deals with the corpus of Sayat`-Nova's works, further divided into manuscript sources and publications; while the second category is the corpus of studies about Sayat`-Nova. Three major aspects can be distinguished in Sayat`-Nova studies: biographical, literary, and musicological. Of the three subdivisions, articles in the first two are more often included in the same monograph. Chapters on Sayat`-Nova in a number of histories of Armenian literature, either general or focusing on that period, similarly deal with these two aspects, i.e., his life and works together, at the same time. In this regard, the titles of these monographs and general histories of Armenian literature comprise a separate section, with important monographs or articles dealing exclusively with only one main aspect of Sayat`-Nova studies, i.e., his life, literature or music, will be classified in the corresponding sections. Reference works form a separate section.

#### A. Manuscript sources of Sayat`-Nova's works

The fundamental source is undoubtedly Sayat`-Nova's own manuscript, the *Davt`ar*. It was copied by Sayat`-Nova himself in the 1760s after he became a married priest. Only the Turkish and Armenian songs are included here. The original Davt`ar



passed down among individuals for more than 100 years and has been kept in the National Museum of Literature and Art in Yerevan, Armenia from the 1920s on. Two facsimiles were published in 1963 and 2005.<sup>1</sup>

The second important comprehensive manuscript of Sayat`-Nova's songs is the collection made by Ioane (Õhan in Armenian),<sup>2</sup> Sayat`-Nova's youngest son, in the 1820s, at the request of T`eimuraz, crown prince of the deposed Georgian Bagratid royal family. In this collection, Sayat`-Nova's Georgian songs were collected for the first time. Õhan also added notes in addition to those his father had left. This manuscript is now kept as MS Georg No.222 in the library of the Institute for the Peoples of Asia in Saint Petersburg.

The songs included in these two manuscripts make up the core of Sayat`-Nova's works. Subsequently, other songs were discovered and attributed to him. Sources for these songs are listed in the endnotes to both Morus Hasrat`yan and Henrik Baxč`inyan's publications of Sayat`-Nova's collected works. However, most of these were inaccessible to me during my research. Since their artistic features do not appear very consistent with those collected in the two manuscripts previously referred to, it was decided not to include these supplementary songs in my study. This question will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 2.

## B. Printed collections of Sayat`-Nova's songs

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<sup>1</sup> *Xafer: nmanahanut`yun*, Haykakan SSH GA Hratarakč`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1963; *Davt`ar: nmanahanut`yun*, Efiše Č`arenc`i anvan Grakanut`yan ev Arvesti T`angarani Hratarakč`ut`yun, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Or in Russian fashion as he called himself, Ivan Seidov.

In the 1840s, Gēorg Axverdean, who was collecting Armenian folk songs, took notice of Sayat`-Nova. He prepared the first edition of the latter's songs for publication, which was realized in 1852<sup>3</sup> as the first volume of his collections of Armenian ašuġ songs.<sup>4</sup> In this collection, Axverdean published only Sayat`-Nova's Armenian songs, 46 in number; but with striking contributions, whose significance will be outlined in the treatment of literary studies of Sayat`-Nova.

In the following decades, more of Sayat`-Nova's songs were discovered and published, most intensively in *The intellectual life of Tiflis Armenians* by Gēorg Tēr-Aġek`sandrian<sup>5</sup> and by Gēorg Asatur, published in *Azgagrakan handēs*,<sup>6</sup> after the editor's study of Ōhan's manuscript in St. Petersburg. His Georgian songs were published piecemeal in the 1870s as well,<sup>7</sup> leading to the publication of the first collection of these Georgian songs by I. Grišašvili in 1918.<sup>8</sup>

During the early Soviet era, still more of Sayat`-Nova's songs were retrieved and published in Yerevan, Tbilisi, or Baku.<sup>9</sup> The first noteworthy collection of Sayat`-Nova's songs in this period was prepared by Garegin Levonyan, founder of Armenian ašuġ studies.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Gusank` A, Sayeat`-Nova*, Vladimir Gusti, Moscow, 1852.

<sup>4</sup> The second volume was published posthumously as *Gusank` B, hay ašuġnerġ*, Azgagrakan Handēs ed., Aragatip Mnac`akan Martiroseanc`, Tiflis, 1903. It is a general collection of Armenian poems and songs.

<sup>5</sup> *Tiflisetsots` mtavor keank`ġ, Masn A Banasteġcut`iwn*, Tiflis, Yovhannēs Martiroseanc`i Tparan, 1886

<sup>6</sup> Eight in number, *Azgagrakan Handēs*, 1903/10; as quoted in Henrik Baxč`inyan, *Sayat`-Nova: kyank`ġ ev gorcġ*, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> As quoted in Henrik Baxč`inyan, 1987, pp. 7-8.

<sup>8</sup> *Saiat`nova*, Tiflis, 1911, as quoted from Henrik Baxč`inyan, 1987, p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Gevorg T`arverdyan, *Hay ašuġner: antip yergeri zhoghovatsu (XVII-XX darrer)*, Yerevani Petakan Hamalsarani Tparan, Yerevan, 1937. The other publications are scattered and difficult to trace. For their bibliography, see: Baxč`inyan, 1987.

<sup>10</sup> *Sayat`-Nova, hayeren xaġeri liakatar ŷoġovacu*, Petakan Hratarakč`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1931.

The next important collection was prepared by Morus Hasrat`yan. Although its first edition appeared in 1945, the best of all its editions appeared in 1963 in honor of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sayat`-Nova's birth.<sup>11</sup> This edition embraces the whole of Sayat`-Nova's trilingual corpus hitherto discovered, including an excellent translation of the Georgian and Armeno-Azeri songs into the Armenian dialect of Tbilisi, comprehensive endnotes, a glossary of difficult words, and index to proper names. Perhaps because of the volume's large print run, it remains the most accessible edition in the Republic of Armenia until now.

It is worth mentioning here that in 1945 a collection of Sayat`-Nova's songs was published in Tehran, Iran by an Iranian-Armenian scholar Ėubēn Abrahamean.<sup>12</sup> But the most significant aspect of this edition is not much the texts of Sayat`-Nova's songs as the discussions preceding them. For further details, see the section on literary studies of Sayat`-Nova.

In 1963, two other important collections edited by famous Georgian and Azerbaijani scholars were published. In Tbilisi, a collection of Sayat`-Nova's Georgian songs was released under the editorship of Alek`sandre Baramiṣe,<sup>13</sup> which remains the best of its kind. In Baku, Həmid Araslı published a selection of Sayat`-Nova's songs, including those originally in Azeri, together with a modern Azeri translation of many Armenian and Georgian songs.<sup>14</sup> Though the Azeri songs in this collection are only

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<sup>11</sup> Sayat`-Nova, *hayeren, vrac`eren, adrbejaneren xaleri ṣoḻovacu*, Haypethrat, Yerevan, 1963.

<sup>12</sup> *Sayat`-Novayi taḻerē : neracakan hōduatsov, lezui usumnasirut`eamb, baṛaranov ev ayl hōduacnerov u ditoḻut`iwnnerov*, Šawasp T`ovmasean, Tehran, 1943.

<sup>13</sup> *Saiat`nova: K`artuli Lek`sebi*, Literaturi da Xelovneba, Tbilisi, 1963.

<sup>14</sup> *Sayat-Nova*, Azərbaycan Dövlət Nəşriyatı, Baku, 1963.

around forty, and the editing leaves much to be desired,<sup>15</sup> it appears to be the largest number of Sayat`-Nova's Azeri songs collated by Azerbaijani scholars so far.

After Hasrat`yan's, the next important collection of Sayat`-Nova's songs was prepared by Henrik Baxč`inyan and others in the late 1980s. Baxč`inyan's collection of Sayat`-Nova's Armenian songs was published separately in 1984,<sup>16</sup> while his trilingual collection, which could be regarded as a more complete and improved version of the former, appeared in 1987.<sup>17</sup> This new trilingual collection was prepared by Baxč`inyan together with the orientalist Nikolay Gevorgyan and the kartvelologist Hrač`ya Bayramyan. In this edition, Sayat`-Nova's Georgian and Armeno-Azeri songs are published in the original (in Armenian transliteration) along with parallel literal translations, as well as artistic translations of some from either Baxč`inyan or Hasrat`yan, together with notes, vocabularies, and an index of proper names.

The last major collection so far appeared in 2003, once more edited by H. Baxč`inyan.<sup>18</sup> It should be stated that none of these editions meets the criteria for a critical edition in that the variants between the Daftar and Ohan's manuscript for example are not recorded in the apparatus. However, the latest it is still extensive. In this edition, the Georgian or Armeno-Azeri songs are published only in Armenian translation. Each is provided with a verbatim translation, while some also feature artistic translations. A significant difference between the two publications is that in the

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<sup>15</sup> For example, Dowsett, 1995, p.422.

<sup>16</sup> *Sayat`-Nova: hayeren xafer*, HSSH GA Hratarakch`ut`yun, 1984.

<sup>17</sup> *Sayat`-Nova: xafer*, Yerevani Petakan Hamalsarani Hratarakch`ut`yun, 1987.

<sup>18</sup> *Sayat`-Nova: xafer : liakatar žofovacu*, Grakanut`yan ev Arvesti T`angarani Hratarakch`ut`yun, Yerevan, 2003.

1987 edition all the Armenian songs, original or in translation, are presented in the reformed orthography of the Armenian script, while in the edition of 2003 they appear in the traditional spelling. This edition also contains an introduction to Sayat`-Nova, his life and works, and the history of Sayat`-Nova studies by Baxč`inyan, a detailed introduction to the Davt`ar, which also comes from Baxč`inyan; an article on Sayat`-Nova's songs by Hrač`ya Šems;<sup>19</sup> 20 songs' Western Armenian translations; 35 melodies; a vocabulary and index of proper names.

I have selected Baxč`inyan's 1987 edition as the principal text of Sayat`-Nova for this study. Though, as mentioned before, none of the published editions can be called fully critical in the full sense, still, this is the only one that includes all Sayat`-Nova's original Armenian, Georgian, and Azeri songs, albeit the latter two in Armenian transliteration only, with songs included in the Davt`ar in their original order, plus verbatim Armenian translations of all, and quite extensive notes, all of which render it the most comprehensive collection of Sayat`-Nova's songs that I have encountered. However, most of the Armenian songs included in Appendix B to the Armenian section, and Azeri songs 118-120 in Appendix B to the Azeri section will be largely excluded from my study,<sup>20</sup> since they derive not from the Davt`ar or Ohan's manuscript, but later scholars' collections, so that their authenticity has not been established.

### C. Comprehensive monographs on Sayat`-Nova

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<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, publication details of this article are absent from Baxč`inyan's collection as well as Šems' collective works.

<sup>20</sup> See their respective endnotes in Baxč`inyan's collection: Xafer, pp. 465-468, 499.

The first is Gēorg Axverdean's collection of Sayat`-Nova's songs. As mentioned before, Axverdean added notes to the songs, translated Sayat`-Nova's and Ōhan's notes from Georgian to Armenian, and compiled a vocabulary of foreign words used by Sayat`-Nova. He also prepared biographical notes and an extensive explanation of the grammatical peculiarities of the Tiflis Armenian dialect, in which Sayat`-Nova created his Armenian songs. These notes remain useful even to this day.

The next important contributor to Sayat`-Nova studies is Hovhannes T`umanyan. In the 1890s, T`umanyan had already taken an interest in Sayat`-Nova. But it was only in 1911 that he began to publish articles about him. Those treated all the significant spheres of Sayat`-Nova studies, including his life and the interpretation and criticism of his songs both in their aesthetic and social aspects. These articles were republished in book form in the Soviet era.<sup>21</sup> T`umanyan's other contribution to Sayat`-Nova studies will be treated in the last chapter of this study. Besides T`umanyan, the Georgian-Armenian painter and social figure Grigor Bašinjaġyan and the Georgian scholar and writer Ioseb Grišašvili also contributed to the study of Sayat`-Nova's life and works;<sup>22</sup> the effort all three exerted in popularizing Sayat`-Nova will be addressed later.

During the early Soviet era, no important comprehensive study about Sayat`-Nova appeared. Nevertheless, his place in histories of Armenian and Georgian literature of

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<sup>21</sup> *Sayat`-Nova*, Haypethrat, 1945; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakchut`yun, Yerevan, 1963.

<sup>22</sup> As quoted from Henrik Baxč`inyan, op. cit., pp. 8-11. T`umanyan's articles are collected in *Sayat`-Nova* as noted above; Bašinjaġyan's (Armenian original) and Grišašvili's articles (in Armenian translation) are collected in: T. A. Karapetyan, G.N. Hovnani ed., *Hayastan ev hay kulturayi masin*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakč`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1983.

the early modern period was secure. In both Manuk Abeġyan's *History of ancient Armenian literature* and the *History of ancient Georgian literature*, under the chief editorship of Korneli Kekeliġe, there are chapters and sections exclusively dedicated to him.<sup>23</sup>

At the climax of Sayat'-Nova-oriented publications in 1963, several collections of articles appeared. Most of them are brief compendia amounting to no more than 300 pages, and focus primarily on Sayat'-Nova's works. Among them, Suren Harut'yunian's *Genius of Song: Sayat'-Nova* is more comprehensive in its contents. It begins with the history of Sayat'-Nova studies, then the historical background for Sayat'-Nova and his compositional activities, before treating aesthetics and analyses of his thought.<sup>24</sup> It is also worth mentioning here Paruyr Muradyan's *Sayat'-Nova according to Georgian sources*,<sup>25</sup> since besides the historical records it collects, as the title suggests, the compiler also discusses Sayat'-Nova's literary merits in the context of the history of Georgian literature, making comparisons between Sayat'-Nova and Besiki, the other great Georgian poet of the period, Sayat'-Nova's younger successor in the Georgian court, among other topics.

The next comprehensive monograph of Sayat'-Nova studies is Paruyr Sevak's *Sayat'-Nova*, published in 1969<sup>26</sup> and republished in 1984. This basically contains the published version of the author's doctoral thesis, for which he was awarded the degree

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<sup>23</sup> As quoted from Henrik Baxġ'inyan, 1987, pp. 11-12, 16.

<sup>24</sup> *Ergi hanġarġ, Sayat'-Nova*, Haypethrat, Yerevan, 1963.

<sup>25</sup> *Sayat'-Novan ġst vrac'akan aġbyurneri: banasirakan prptumner ev nyut'er*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakġ'ut'yun, Yerevan, 1963.

<sup>26</sup> *Sayat'-Nova*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakġ'ut'yun, Yerevan, 1969; repr. 1984.

in 1967. This highly successful book is divided into two main parts: the first “*When was Sayat`-Nova born?*” argues for 1722 as the year of Sayat`-Nova’s birth. The second “*Sayat`-Nova’s creative works*” deals with the songs’ aesthetic features. Here Sevak examines several aspects of Sayat`-Nova’s songs, from motifs to rhetoric. In his poetic language, Sevak stresses love as the nucleus of Sayat`-Nova’s songs. Then he highlights the “individual” features in Sayat`-Nova’s songs: his more elevated style of love lyrics, his innovative language, his keen observation and vivid expression, etc. Paruyr Sevak makes numerous comparisons between Sayat`-Nova and a large number of accomplished poets from different nations. He draws numerous parallels between Sayat`-Nova and these poets, and comes to the conclusion that Sayat`-Nova is unique among Armenian *ašuf*s of that period. Judging from his artistic accomplishments, he is well qualified as a poet. But within the rank of poets, he is a performing *ašuf*, he composes in the form and language of *ašuf*s, which facts delineate him a unique poet as well.

Published in 1987, Vač`e Nalbandyan’s *Sayat`-Nova*<sup>27</sup> seems like a good compression of previous studies. In less than 200 pages, its author talks about Sayat`-Nova’s life, the history of Sayat`-Nova studies, the philological and literary features of Sayat`-Nova’s songs.

After Paruyr Sevak’s work, the next major comprehensive study of the great Armenian *ašuf* is Henrik Baxč`inyan’s *Sayat`-Nova: life and work*.<sup>28</sup> Like Sevak’s,

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<sup>27</sup> *Sayat`-Nova*, Sovetakan Groġ, Yerevan, 1987.

<sup>28</sup> *Sayat`-Nova: kyank` ě ev gorcě*, Yerevani Petakan Hamalsarani Hratarakč`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1987.



Baxč'inyan's monograph is also fundamentally his own dissertation. However, this book is more complete in its structure. The preface is a brief review of the history of Sayat'-Nova studies. The introduction narrates the historical background and urban setting in Tiflis. The first major section of the dissertation is *Sayat'-Nova's life*. The second part, *Sayat'-Nova's works*, is divided into three chapters: typological questions, sources and traditions, and the aesthetic values of the bard's works. This book is the last major monograph on Sayat'-Nova from the Soviet period.

Since the collapse of the USSR no new important monograph of Sayat'-Nova studies has appeared in the Republic of Armenia. However, in 1997, Charles Dowsett, a famous Armenologist from Oxford University, published his *Sayat'-Nova: an eighteenth-century troubadour*.<sup>29</sup> It is the most significant recent monograph on Sayat'-Nova. The content of this twelve-chapter book can be quite evenly divided into the two categories. The first is Sayat'-Nova's life and work, which comprises a meticulous philological study of Sayat'-Nova's works and related literary sources, more detailed than any other existing monographs in the comprehensiveness of its notes. Nevertheless, some of the author's views, as, for example, concerning the authorship of six Russian poems in Ōhan's manuscript, are very controversial.

#### D. Important articles exclusively dealing with Sayat'-Nova's life

In the 1930s, the first manuscript copied by Sayat'-Nova was discovered and

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<sup>29</sup> *Sayat'-Nova: an eighteenth-century troubadour*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, vol. 561; Subsidia, tomus 91, Peeters, Louvain, 1997.

studied,<sup>30</sup> leading to the identification of *ašut* Sayat`-Nova with the priest Step`anos of Kax<sup>31</sup> in 1766.

From 1969 on, a debate ensued about the exact location of the “Haĭpat monastic community”, where Fr. Step`anos stayed during his years of celibate priesthood in the late period of his life.<sup>32</sup>

In 1981, a new manuscript from his pen was discovered, which confirms his residence in the port Anzalī in the Gīlān province of Iran in 1760-1761.<sup>33</sup>

#### E. Studies exclusively focusing on Sayat`-Nova's work

The most important monographs about Sayat`-Nova are comprehensive in their content. The first of these was written by Nikol Aĭbalean who persisted in his Sayat`-Nova studies after his exile from the Caucasus and published a series of articles entitled *With Sayat`-Nova* in the journal *Azdaĭ Šabatoreak* in Beirut from 1944 to 1947, which, however, remained incomplete.<sup>34</sup>

In his study mentioned above Ėubēn Abrahamean was perhaps the first to discuss the Persian elements in Sayat`-Nova's songs, while his analysis of the “prime aesthetic lines” of Sayat`-Nova's songs focuses largely on prosodic and euphonic issues, as well as a short comparison between Sayat`-Nova and a few famous medieval Persian poets,

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<sup>30</sup> L. Melik`set`-Bek, *Nor nyut`er Sayat`-Novayi aṛaspelakan nahatakut`yan šurjě*, in *Proletar*, 1945, No. 189, as quoted from Baxč`inyan, 1987, pp. 12, 345.

<sup>31</sup> As quoted from Baxč`inyan, 1987, p. 19. Kax (Georgian *Kaxi*) is modern Qax in Azerbaijan.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid..

<sup>33</sup> B. Č`ugaszyan, *Sayat`-Novayi ěndōrinakac norahayt jeṛagir matyaně*, in *Lraber*, 1981, No. 7, as quoted from Baxč`inyan, 1987, pp. 19, 346.

<sup>34</sup> Nikol Aĭbalean, *Sayat`-Novayi het* (amboĭjakan erker, vol.II), Hamazgayin Tparan, Beirut, 1966.

especially Bābā Ṭāher `Uriyān.

In 1954, Mirəli Seydov published his research about Sayat`-Nova in Azeri,<sup>35</sup> the first monograph about the aṣuḥ in the language in which Sayat`-Nova composed most of his songs. In this book, the author talks about the Armenian aṣuḥ tradition and the themes in Sayat`-Nova's songs.

In 1963, several works appeared in Armenian. The Committee for Higher and Secondary Professional Education of Armenia and the Abovyan State Pedagogical Institute edited a collection of scholarly articles about Sayat`-Nova, covering a range of historical, philological, musicological and literary studies.<sup>36</sup> Xoren Sargsyan's *Sayat`-Nova* deals with four topics about Sayat`-Nova's songs, some of which, for example the fourth, "The People's Anger and Instigation", are quite typically Soviet.<sup>37</sup> Of those literary comments produced by diasporan Armenian scholars, perhaps that of the Mkhitarist scholar Mesrop Čanaṣean is the most profound.<sup>38</sup> It begins with an introduction to the historical background, followed by a brief review of the history of Sayat`-Nova studies, a lengthy index of the numbering of Sayat`-Nova's songs' in different manuscripts, the first lines, years of composition, and types of songs, then a biographical introduction to Sayat`-Nova, and literary analysis of his songs, in which prosodic matters loom large.

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<sup>35</sup> *Sayat`-Nova*, Azərbaycan SSR Elmlər Akademiyası Nəşriyyatı, Baku, 1954; Russian translation: *Pevets narodov zakavkaz'ia*, Izd-vo AN Az CCP, Baku, 1963.

<sup>36</sup> HSSH MS Barjaguyn ev Mijnakarg Masnagitakan Krt`ut`yan Komite; Erevani Kh. Abovyani anvan Haykakan Petakan Mankavaržakan Institut, *Sayat`-Nova, gitakan aṣxatut`yunneri žoḷovacū*, Haykakan Petakan Mankavarzhakan Instituti Hratarakč`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1963.

<sup>37</sup> *Sayat`-Nova*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakč`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1963.

<sup>38</sup> *Sayeat`-Nova: cnndean 250 ameakin aṛit`ov*, S. Lazzaro, Venice, 1963.

## F. Studies of Sayat`-Nova's music

Only the melodies of some of Sayat`-Nova's Armenian songs have survived. The first collection of those dates from the 1890s, when H. T`umanyan and others took interest in the great Armenian *ašuġ*. But today the most popular publication of those melodies was produced by Mušel Aġayan and Šara Talyan in 1946, and republished in 1963.<sup>39</sup>

In 1990, Hasmig Injejikian from the Faculty of Music at McGill University, Montreal, submitted an MA thesis *Sayat`-Nova and Armenian Ashoogh musical tradition*.<sup>40</sup> it is the first thesis on Sayat`-Nova in a major Western language. In 1995, Nikoġos T`ahmizean published *Sayat`-Nova and the Armenian minstrel tradition*,<sup>41</sup> the core of which is a discussion of Sayat`-Nova's aesthetics, poetics, and music. T`ahmizean's analysis of Sayat`-Nova's melodies involves a more detailed discussion about music and different genres of *ašuġ* songs than Injejikian had pursued.

## G. Reference books about Sayat`-Nova Studies

In 1963, several such reference works appeared. Paruyr Muradyan's *Sayat`-Nova according to Georgian Sources* already mentioned is more than a pure work of reference. In *The Popular Sources of Sayat`-Nova's Works*, Aram Łanalanyan discusses Sayat`-

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<sup>39</sup> *Sayat`-Nova*, Haypethrat, Yerevan, 1963.

<sup>40</sup> Unpublished thesis, McGill University, Faculty of Musicology dissertation, 1990.

<sup>41</sup> *Sayeat`-Novan ew hay gusana-ašuġakan erg-eražštut`iwně*, Drazark Hratarakč`ut`iwn, Pasadena, CA, 1995.

Nova's relation to folk literature<sup>42</sup>. Garnik Ananyan's *Sayat`-Nova in Poets' Songs*<sup>43</sup> is a collection of poetry on Sayat`-Nova by poets from different nations in the Russian and Soviet domain, primarily Armenian. The last reference book published in 1963 mentioned here is Ashot K`oç`oyan's *Dictionary of Sayat`-Nova's Armenian Poems*<sup>44</sup>, a dictionary of difficult, ancient, dialectal, and foreign words appearing in Sayat`-Nova's Armenian songs.

The last reference book to be mentioned here is Łazaryan's *Sayat`-Nova*<sup>45</sup>, a good collection of songs, poems, comments, and bibliography about the bard.

#### H. Translations of Sayat`-Nova in major languages

The first translation of Sayat`-Nova's works of this kind was effected in 1851,<sup>46</sup> when Iakov Polonskiĭ, with the help of Gēorg Axverdean, provided an introduction to Sayat`-Nova and translated some of his songs into Russian in prose even before the publication of Axverdean's first collection.

In 1906, Aršak Č`opanean published his *Les Trouvères Arméniens*,<sup>47</sup> which is the first introduction to the Armenian ašuġ tradition in a major Western language. It features a preface and translations of various medieval and early modern Armenian poems and songs, including some of Sayat`-Nova's works.

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<sup>42</sup> *Sayat`-Novayi steġagorcut`yan žoġovrdakan aġbyurnerġ*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakč`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1963.

<sup>43</sup> *Sayat`-Novan banasteġcneri ergerum*, Haypethrat, Yerevan, 1963.

<sup>44</sup> *Sayat`-Novayi hayeren khagheri bararan*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakchut`yun, Yerevan, 1963.

<sup>45</sup> *Sayat`-Nova (met`odamatenagitakan nyut`eri žoġovacu)*, HSSH Petakan Gradaran, Yerevan, 1987.

<sup>46</sup> *Kavkaz*, 1851, No.1-2; as quoted from Baxč`inyan, op.cit., p.6.

<sup>47</sup> Par Archag Tchobanian, Société du Mercure de France, Paris, 1906. But it is to be mentioned here that in this collection, Č`opanean had works of medieval cleric authors and early modern secular ašuġs collected and translated together.

The most famous translator of Sayat`-Nova into Russian is undoubtedly Valeriĭ Briusov, who was himself an accomplished poet. His collection of Armenian poetry in Russian translation, *Armenian poetry from the most ancient time to our days*, was published in Moscow in 1916.<sup>48</sup> It is one of the most comprehensive collections of its kind and includes twelve translations of Sayat`-Nova's songs. More significant for this study Briusov's discussion of the artistic features of Sayat`-Nova's works in the preface to this collection, which is an ardent praise of the *ašuf*. Perhaps due to this highly affirmative evaluation, Briusov's remarks later became the most frequently quoted foreign comment about Sayat`-Nova in works published in Armenia.

After Briusov, there are at least five other translations of Sayat`-Nova's works into Russian, all of which were prepared and published during the Soviet era, by scholars like Suren Harut`yunyan, Grigor Abov, Ioseb Grišašvili etc..<sup>49</sup> The last of these translations, rendered by G. A. T`at`osyan, published in Leningrad, 1982, is a full translation of Sayat`-Nova's original corpus in three languages, with annotations and an introduction by Vač`e Nalbandyan.<sup>50</sup>

At least in 1936 and 1963, when anniversaries of Sayat`-Nova's birth or death were commemorated in the former Soviet Union, publications of his songs appeared in different languages. For example, the translation published in 1963<sup>51</sup> includes an introduction and translations of a small number of his works in English, French,

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<sup>48</sup> Valeriĭ Iakovlevich Briusov, *Poëziia Armenii s drevniejšikh vremen do nashikh dneĭ*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed.: Izd-vo Mosk. Armianskago Komiteta, Moscow, 1916; revised ed.: Izd-vo. Aiastan, Erevan, 1966.

<sup>49</sup> As quoted from Baxč`inyan, 1987, p. 350

<sup>50</sup> *Saiat-Nova: Stikhotvoreniia*, Introduction: V. S. Nal`bandian; Compiled and Noted by G. A. Tatosian, Sovetskii Pisatel', Leningradskoe otdelenie, Leningrad, 1982

<sup>51</sup> Hrač`ya Hovhannesian ed., *Sayat`-Nova, 1714-1963*, Haypethrat, Yerevan, 1963

German, and Spanish. But both the number of translated works and the print run are very limited. Armen Donoyan's *Sayat Nova in Armenian and in English*,<sup>52</sup> published in the 1990s, contains more than a dozen songs translated into pseudo-Shakespearian English. This is followed by Charles Dowsett's *Sayat`-Nova: an eighteenth-century troubadour*. There Dowsett presents a considerable number of Sayat`-Nova's songs, originally written in different languages,<sup>53</sup> translated into English. However, since his translations are given primarily to illustrate his arguments, they appear throughout his book without regard to chronology or their sequence in full collections.

Most recently thirteen English translations of twelve of Sayat`-Nova's original songs appeared in the second volume of *The heritage of Armenian literature*,<sup>54</sup> published in 200. However, these are merely reprints of existing translations by Dowsett and others.

## Section 2 Review of Armenian *ashu* studies

As this investigation focuses on the bardic tradition in early modern Western Asia, works exclusively dedicated to the nineteenth and twentieth century bardic tradition will be mentioned only where necessary.

From the mid-nineteenth century Armenian scholars began collecting Armenian

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<sup>52</sup> In the main text, the author's name and the book title appear in their original English form; while in Armenian they will be: Armēn Tonoyean, *Sayat`-Nova hayerēn ew anglerēn*, Navasart publishing house, Glendale, CA, 1996

<sup>53</sup> Naturally including Sayat`-Nova's Armenian, Georgian and Azeri songs; and his *mulamma* or macaronic song, written in all the three languages plus Persian; besides, since Dowsett regards the six Russian songs in Ohan's manuscript genuinely by Sayat`-Nova, he has a chapter in his book dedicated to the translation and study of these songs.

<sup>54</sup> Edited by Agop J. Hacikyan, together with Gabriel Basmajian, Edward S. Franchuk, Nourhan Ouzounian, Wayne State Univ. Press, Detroit, IL; pp. 1057-1070.

ašuġ songs along with works of folklore. It is worthy restating here that Gēorg Axverdean gathered Sayat`-Nova's songs for the first printed collection because of his interest in Armenian folk songs. Consequently, early collections tended to combine ašuġ songs with folk songs and sometimes even with the creations of literary poets almost indiscriminately.<sup>55</sup>

Research specializing on Armenian ašuġs and their art began late in the century. In 1892, Garegin Levonyan, son of the celebrated ašuġ Ĵivani, published his *Armenian ašuġs*.<sup>56</sup> In this book, for the first time in the history of Armenian modern scholarship, the author provides a thorough introduction to the Armenian *ašuġ* art, starting from the significance of the term ašuġ, to the ašuġs' lifestyle and performing activities, the different genres of ašuġ songs, etc., but its most voluminous and important contribution is the list he compiled that included biographies or even the songs of 225 Armenian ašuġs. Such a comprehensive list is unique among Armenian monographs on this subject.

Trdat Palean published his *Armenian ašuġs* in Smyrna, 1911-12.<sup>57</sup> Further song collections and monographs on the Armenian ašuġ tradition appeared in Soviet Armenia during the 1930s. Of these, Gevorg T'arverdyan's *Armenian ašuġs: collection of unpublished songs (XVII-XX cc.)* is perhaps the first.<sup>58</sup> The songs first collected here reappear in later Soviet publications. *The ašuġs and their art*, Garegin Levonyan's

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<sup>55</sup> *Gusank`, B, hay ašuġnerě*, Azgagrakan Handēs ed., Aragatip Mnac`akan Martiroseanc`, Tiflis, 1903.

<sup>56</sup> Garegin Lewonean, *Hay ašuġner*, Hratarakut`iwn "Shirak" Gravačařanoc`i, Alek`andrapol, 1892.

<sup>57</sup> Trdat episkopos Palean, *Hay ašuġner: žoġovrdakan hay ergič`ner ew taġasac`k`*, in 2 vol.s, Mamurean Tpagrut`iwn, Smyrna, 1911-1912.

<sup>58</sup> *Hay ašuġner: antip yergeri žoġovacu (XVII-XX darer)*, Erevani Petakan Hamalsarani Tparan, Yerevan, 1937.



second monograph exclusively dedicated to *ašuġ* studies was published in 1944.<sup>59</sup>

There Levonyan inserted a categorization of Armenian *ašuġ*s according to their place of performance, a discussion about *ašuġ* contests at a distance, a chapter on the success of Sayat`-Nova, and a more profound discussion of *ašuġ* prosody. In 1963, Levonyan's collected *Works*, which are almost exclusively dedicated to *ašuġ* studies, including literary and bibliographical materials, was published 16 years after his death.<sup>60</sup>

In 1957, T`arverdyan's second collection of Armenian *ašuġ* songs was published under the title of *Armenian gusans*.<sup>61</sup> It treats works of Armenian *ašuġ*s from the seventeenth to the first half of the twentieth centuries. In 1961, Hasmik Sahakyan published her collection of pre-modern Armenian *ašuġ* songs under the title of *Armenian ašuġs, XVII-XVIII century*,<sup>62</sup> in the introduction to which she gives an excellent introduction to her subject.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Armenian Academy of Science published a five-volume *History of modern Armenian literature*.<sup>63</sup> This important work is a continuation of Manuk Abeġyan's *History of ancient Armenian literature*. In its first and fourth volume, published in 1962 and 1972, there are chapters on Armenian *ašuġ* literature in the first half of the nineteenth century, and in the second half of that century and the beginning of the twentieth century. The first volume contains a section on *ašuġ* Širin, while the fourth highlights *ašuġ* Ĵivani, both being regarded as the most

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<sup>59</sup> *Hay ashughner XVII-XVIII dd.*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakč`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1961.

<sup>60</sup> Garegin Levonyan, *Erker*, Haypethrat, Yerevan, 1963.

<sup>61</sup> T`arverdyan collected; A. Nazinyan ed., *Hay Gusanner*, Haypethrat, Yerevan, 1957.

<sup>62</sup> *Hay ašuġner XVII-XVIII dd.*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakč`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1961.

<sup>63</sup> Academy of Science, Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic, *Hay nor grakanut`yan patmut`yun*, in 5 vol.s, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakč`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1962-1979.

accomplished Armenian *aşu* of their generation.

Most other collections published in Soviet Armenia after World war II focus on modern *aşu*s from the nineteenth century on.<sup>64</sup> Other discussions about Armenian *aşu*s appeared not as exclusive monographs, but in the context of Armenian folk songs.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, other studies treat the earlier Armenian bardic type of *gusans*; but as they argue for significant continuity between Armenian *aşu* art and that of their older counterparts, they often handle both together.<sup>66</sup> These afford good discussions and analyses of the history of Armenian *aşu* art, the artistic features of their songs, and the latter's social importance. However, after Levonyan, there is little investigation of *aşu*s' training and performance.

### Section 3 Turkish and Azerbaijani *aşık/aşıq* studies

Collections of *aşık* songs in Ottoman Turkish exist, of which one striking example is Alî Ufkî's *Mecmûa-i sâz ü söz*, a large seventeenth century collection of various melodies, now edited and studied.<sup>67</sup>

Since the *aşık* tradition in Turkey was widespread and maintained itself into the second half of the twentieth century, there are numerous publications of *aşık* literature

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<sup>64</sup> For example, .K. G. Durgaryan ed., *Şiraki Hay aşuñerë* (Sovetakan Grof, Yerevan, 1986), focuses on Armenian *aşu*s from the area of Şirak in the last 200 years.

<sup>65</sup> A significant example is Manuk Abeñyan, famous Armenian philologist's *Ancient gusan folk songs* (*Hin gusanakan žolovrdakan erger*), Hratarakut'yun Pethamalsarani, Yeren, 1931; also in *Erker*: P. Hakobyan and S. Harut'yunyan ed., *Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakč'ut'yun*, Yerevan, 1966-1985, vol. 6.

<sup>66</sup> For example, Şaviñ Grigoryan's *Hayoc`hin gusanakan ergerë*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakč'ut'yun, Yerevan, 1971.

<sup>67</sup> For example, Şükrü Elçin, *Alî Ufkî: Hayatı, esesleri ve Mecmûa-i sâz ü söz: Tıpkıbasım*, Milli Eğitim Basımevi, İstanbul, 1976; M. Hakan Cevher, *Alî Ufkî: Hâzâ mecmûa-i sâz ü söz: Çeviriyazım-İnceleme*, İzmir, 2003.

collections, both for individual aşiks, for aşiks in a certain geographical area, or as part of larger anthologies.<sup>68</sup> Here the emphasis will be placed on studies of the aşık/aşiq tradition in Turkey, with reference only to important collections.

The modern study of the aşık tradition in Turkey dates to the early twentieth century.<sup>69</sup> In 1914, Fuad Köprülü, one of the founders of modern Turkish literary studies, published a series of articles *Saz şairleri* in the newspaper *İkdam*, which laid the basis for scholarly investigation of the aşık tradition in Turkey. From then on, Köprülü published scores of articles on the subject<sup>70</sup> reviewing its history and designation (“*ozan*”) as well as its artistic peculiarities and individual aşiks’ life and work. These include one entitled *Turkish literature’s influence on Armenian literature*,<sup>71</sup> which is still of interest,<sup>72</sup> though it must be argued that since Köprülü talked about Armenian aşiks’ writing in Turkish, the issue is rather one of Armenian contributions to Turkish literature, not Turkish influence on Armenian literature. Besides those aşiks’ works collected in different articles, he also published collections of aşık songs, individually or in collections. The most famous are the multi-volume *Turkish saz poets*:

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<sup>68</sup> For example, Uraz Murat: *Halk edebiyatı, şiir ve dil örnekleri*, Sühulet Kütüphanesi, İstanbul, 1933

<sup>69</sup> According to Erman Artun, Ziya Gökalp and Rıza Tevfik had their articles on aşık topics published around 1913, a little earlier than Köprülü. But their works are less important. See Erman Artun, *Âşıklık geleneği ve âşık edebiyatı*, p.23.

<sup>70</sup> For a list of important collections, referable Artun, pp.24-25.

<sup>71</sup> *Türk edebiyatı’nın Ermeni edebiyatı üzerindeki te’sirleri*, Originally published in *Edebiyat Fakültesi Mecmuası*, c.2, 1922, pp. 1-30; collected in *Edebiyat araştırmaları*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara, 1966, pp. 239-269.

<sup>72</sup> From the introduction of this article, it is apparent that Köprülü wrote this article in refutation of some Amenologists, including Ç’opanean (as Köprülü saw from the latter’s preface to *Les Trouvères Arméniens*), who seem to have failed to employ any comparative method in their study, where “even ... the name of Turkish literature seems not mentioned”.

texts and examinations,<sup>73</sup> *Anthology of Turkish saz poets*,<sup>74</sup> *Turkish saz poets: Anthology*,<sup>75</sup> and *Turkish Saz Poets*.<sup>76</sup> Some of his important articles on aşık related topics are collected in the anthology *Studies of Literature*.<sup>77</sup> Much of Köprülü's work is philological, for example, his study of the title *ozan*, the predecessor of aşiks, relying on historical records, classical literature, or dictionaries more than aşiks' *defters*.<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, he made two valuable observations, the first that aşık literature is different from genuine folk literature and the second that elements of folk literature, classical literature, and Sufi tekke literature are all distinguishable in aşık literature.<sup>79</sup> His second point has been developed by many Turkish scholars after him;<sup>80</sup> but unfortunately not the first. Later Turkish aşık studies are more often conducted under folk literature studies, or more specifically, folklore studies, as I will discuss below.

After Fuad Köprülü, from the 1940s on, his student and assistant, the famous folklorist Pertev Naili Boratav, became one of the most distinguished Turkish scholars on aşık studies.<sup>81</sup> In the 1940s he already published a number of books on Turkish

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<sup>73</sup> *Türk sazşairlerine ait metinler ve tetkikler*, a collection of both lyrics and music in 6 vol.s, Evkaf Matbaası, İstanbul, 1929-1931.

<sup>74</sup> *Türk sazşairleri antolojisi*, in 13 parts, most published by Kanaat kitabevi, İstanbul, 1930-1940.

<sup>75</sup> *Türk sazşairleri: antoloji*, in 3 vol.s, Kanaat kitabevi, İstanbul, 1940-1941.

<sup>76</sup> *Türk sazşairleri*, in 5 parts, Güven Basımevi, Ankara, 1962-1965.

<sup>77</sup> *Edebiyat araştırmaları*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara, 1966.

<sup>78</sup> *Ozan*, originally published in *Azerbaycan Yurt Bilgisi*, No. 3, pp. 138-140, 1932; collected in *Edebiyat araştırmaları*, pp. 131-144.

<sup>79</sup> As reflected in his two longest articles on aşık studies: *Sazşâirleri, dün ve bugün* (originally published as his surface to collected *Türk sazşairleri*, Kanaat kitabevi, İstanbul, 1940-1941; collected in *Edebiyat araştırmaları*, pp. 165-193) and

*Türk edebiyatı'nda 'âşık tarzı'nın menşe' ve tekâmülü hakkında bir tecrübe* (originally published in *Millî tettebbûlar mecmuası*, 1, pp. 5-46, 1915; collected in *Edebiyat araştırmaları*, pp. 195-238).

<sup>80</sup> Folk literature, aşık literature, tekke literature are often dealt with simultaneously by the same author; for example: Mehmet Yardımcı, *Başlangıcından günümüze halk şiiri, âşık şiiri, tekke şiiri*, Ürün Yayınları, Ankara, 1998.

<sup>81</sup> Of course, during the same period, there are a number of good collections or studies about the aşık tradition done by other Turkish scholars as well. For example, collection: Uraz Murat, *Halk edebiyatı, şiir ve dil örnekleri*, Sühulet Kütüphanesi, İstanbul, 1933; Studies: Ahmet Talat Onay, *Halk şiirlerinin şekil ve nev'i*, Devlet Matbaası, İstanbul, 1928, republished by Akçağ, Ankara, 1996; Osman Cemal

folklore or folk literature, for example, *Courses of folk literature*<sup>82</sup> and *Annotated anthology of folk poetry*,<sup>83</sup> which also embrace the aşık tradition. In the 1950s, he made an even more important contribution in the section on the Turkish aşık tradition in the second volume of *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta*,<sup>84</sup> which introduced foreign readers to the aşık tradition and studies in Turkey thoroughly and systematically for the first time in a major Western language. This introduction begins by explaining the word aşık and offering a brief definition of this tradition, then the characters of its performer, the aşıks, their training, functions and performing venues; thereafter follow the genres of aşık composition, their prosody, styles, and finally, the history of the tradition's evolution, together with lists of prominent aşıks. It encompassed most aspects of aşık literature, so that subsequent examinations of the topic must make it their starting point.<sup>85</sup>

After Boratav, his student İlhan Başgöz became one of the most eminent Turkish folklorists, who has also compiled an anthology of Turkish folk literature.<sup>86</sup> However, his research deals with narrative folk tales more than rhymed songs.<sup>87</sup> Publications on the Turkish aşık tradition continue to appear.<sup>88</sup> But it seems the majority are either

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Kaygılı, *İstanbul'da semai kahveleri ve meydan şairleri*, Bühraneddin Basımevi, İstanbul, 1937.

<sup>82</sup> *Halk edebiyatı dersleri*, Uzluk Basımevi, Ankara, 1942.

<sup>83</sup> *İzahlı halk şiiri antolojisi*, together with Halil Vedat Fıratlı, Maarif Matbaası, Ankara, 1968.

<sup>84</sup> Jean Deny et al. ed., *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta*, Aquis Mattiacis Apud Franciscum Steiner, Wiesbaden, 1964, pp. 129-147.

<sup>85</sup> It is worth mentioning here, that after Boratav's introduction, perhaps the next important monograph on Turkish aşık tradition in a major Western language is: *Sänger und Poeten mit der Laute: türkische âşık und ozan*, Ursula Reinhard, Tiago de Oliveira Pinto, Dietrich Reimer Verlag, Berlin, 1989.

<sup>86</sup> *İzahlı türk halk edebiyatı antolojisi*, Ararat Yayınevi, İstanbul, 1968.

<sup>87</sup> *Hikâye: Turkish folk romance as performance Art*, Indiana University Press, IN, 2008; Başgöz's student Kemal Sıray's scholar interest is even more removed from the aşık tradition. See Sıray's personal webpages: <http://mypage.iu.edu/~ksilay/>, <http://www.indiana.edu/~ceus/faculty/silay.shtml>, etc., as retrieved on Dec. 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>88</sup> For Example, an edited edition of Azerbaijani scholar Əhliman Axundov's *Azərbaycan aşıqları və el*

narrative- or music- oriented. Among the contemporary Turkish specialists on the aşık tradition, Şükrü Elçin, Erman Artun, Doğan Kaya, Süleyman Şenel are productive authors, whose research often covers aspects of literature, music, performance, social impact, etc..<sup>89</sup>

Aşık studies in Azerbaijan can be traced back to the 1920s. In the early decades, it seems that aşık study in Azerbaijan focused on collecting aşık compositions.<sup>90</sup> From the 1950s on, important titles began that deal with the general features of the Azerbaijani aşık tradition. The first to be mentioned should be Həmid Araslı's *Aşık composition*, which provides a chronological line of compositions in the genre.<sup>91</sup> It can be classed as the most comprehensive introduction to Azerbaijani aşık literature of its generation. But before moving to Azerbaijani aşık studies after 1970s, it is worth mentioning that most monographs on Azerbaijani-Armenian literature relations appear during 1950s to 1970s: Gurgen Antonyan's *Literary relations between the Armenian and Azerbaijani peoples*,<sup>92</sup> Əkbər Yerevanlı's *Armeno-Azerbaijani oral literature relations*<sup>93</sup> and *Azerbaijani-Armenian literary relations*,<sup>94</sup> Mirəli Seyidov's

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*şüirləri* is prepared by Saim Sakaoğlu, Ali Berat Alptekin, Esma Şimşek, and published as *Azərbaycan âşıqları və el şüirləri*, in 2 vol.s, Halk Kültürü, İstanbul, 1985-1986.

<sup>89</sup> For example: Erman Artun, *Âşıklık geleneği ve âşık edebiyatı*, Karaman Kitabevi, İstanbul, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., 2011; *Aşık edebiyatı araştırmaları*, Kitabevi, İstanbul, 2008; *Aşık edebiyatı metin tahlilleri*, Kitabevi, İstanbul, 2010. Şükrü Elçin: *Halk Edebiyatı araştırmaları*, 2 vol.s, Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, Ankara, 1988. Doğan Kaya, *Sivas'ta âşıklık geleneği ve Âşık Ruhsatı*, T.C. Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1994. Süleyman Şenel: *Kastamonu'da âşık fasılları, türler, çeşitler, çeşitlemeler*, Kastamonu Valiliği, 2009.

<sup>90</sup> For example, H. Əlizadə ed., *Azərbaycan aşığıları*, Azərnəş, Baku, 1929. There might be a few works on the general characters of Azerbaijani aşık tradition; but unfortunately the dissertation's author so far has not seen the early documents earlier than 1940s.

<sup>91</sup> *Aşık yaradıcılığı*, first published as the preface to *Aşığılar* (Baku, 1957), then published as monograph by Birləşmiş Nəşriyyatı, Baku, 1960.

<sup>92</sup> *Erməni və Azərbaycan xalqlarının ədəbi əlaqəsi*, Azərbaycan Dövlət Nəşriyyatı, Baku, 1955.

<sup>93</sup> *Erməni-Azərbaycan şifahi xalq ədəbi əlaqələri*, Hayastan Nəşriyyatı, Yerevan, 1958

<sup>94</sup> *Azəri-Erməni ədəbi əlaqələri*, Hayastan Nəşriyyatı, Yerevan, 1968, which includes a lengthy chapter on Armenian *aşu*s composing in Azeri in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries.

*Azerbaijani-Armenian literary relations: the medieval centuries*,<sup>95</sup> Yusif Ramazanov's *Armenian aşıqs composing in Azeri: nineteenth century*,<sup>96</sup> etc.. It is, perhaps only in this period, when the focal point of Soviet internal national policy was to promote the policy of *Druzhba Narodov*, that the political atmosphere was most suitable for the creation of these monographs.

From the 1970s to the present, quite a few good monographs on Azerbaijani aşiq literature have been published; e.g.: Qara Namazov's *The Azerbaijan aşiq art*,<sup>97</sup> which deals with the history of the Azerbaijani aşiq tradition and its artistic features; and much later, *Aşıqs: book of biographical knowledge*,<sup>98</sup> which is rather a complete bibliographical dictionary of Azerbaijani aşıqs; Məhərrəm Qasımlı's *The ozan aşiq art*, which is a good introduction to the origin and history of the Azerbaijani aşiq tradition and its various regional styles;<sup>99</sup> Mürsəl Həkimov's *The poetics of aşiq art*,<sup>100</sup> which is one of the most comprehensive monographs published in post-Soviet Azerbaijan, covering a range of topics from the history of the Azerbaijani aşiq tradition, and its connection with classical literature, folklore, folk ceremonies, and lyrical and narrative contents, to its poetic forms and prosody.

#### Section 4 Studies of early modern Armenian elevated poetry

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<sup>95</sup> *Azərbaycan-Erməni ədəbi əlaqələr: orta əsrlər*, Elm, Baku, 1976

<sup>96</sup> *Azərbaycan dilində yazıb-yaradan Erməni aşıqları: XIX Əsr*, Elm, Baku, 1976.

<sup>97</sup> *Azərbaycan aşiq sənəti*, Yazıcı, Baku, 1984.

<sup>98</sup> *Aşıqlar: biqrafik məlumat kitabı*; so far at least the first volume has been published: Səda, Baku, 2004.

<sup>99</sup> *Ozan aşiq sənəti*, Uğur, Baku, 2003.

<sup>100</sup> *Aşiq sənətinin poetikası*, Səda, Baku, 2004.

Two monographs on the history of Armenian literature deal extensively with this period. The former is Manuk Abeġyan's *History of ancient Armenian literature*; and the latter, Henrik Baxċ'inyan's *Armenian literature of the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries*.<sup>101</sup> The poetry of that period is treated by Hasmik Sahakyan in two important volumes with the same title *Late medieval Armenian poetry (sixteenth-seventeenth century)*.<sup>102</sup> The first of these from 1975 is a study, while the second from 1986-87 is a comprehensive collection of contemporary poems. Another collection of four early modern Armenian poets was prepared by Hamazasp Oskanean.<sup>103</sup>

Of the more important poets who enjoy individual volumes of their work, one might mention: Grigoris Aġt'amarċ'i (late fifteenth to early sixteenth century catholicos of Aġt'amar);<sup>104</sup> Yovasap' Sebastac'i (first half of the sixteenth century);<sup>105</sup> Zak'aria Gnunc'i (pupil of Grigoris Aġt'amarċ'i);<sup>106</sup> Nersēs Mokac'i (ecclesiastic during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries);<sup>107</sup>; Martiros Ērimec'i (accomplished seventeenth century Armenian ecclesiastic);<sup>108</sup> Eremia K'ēōmiwrċean (important seventeenth century Armenian lay cultural figure in

<sup>101</sup> *XVII-XVIII dareri Hay grakanut'yunē*, Luys, Yerevan, 1999.

<sup>102</sup> *Uš miġnadari hay banasteġcut'yunē* (XVI-XVII dd.), Haykakan SSH GA Hratarakċ'ut'yun, Yerevan, 1975; *Uš miġnadari hay banasteġcut'yunē* (XVI-XVII dd.), in 2 vol.s, Haykakan SSH GA Hratarakċ'ut'yun, Yerevan, 1986-1987.

<sup>103</sup> *Ć'ors hay taġasac'ner ew anonċ' taġerē: Yovhannēs Karnec'i, Grigor ark'ep, Ōšakants'i, Movsēs Dpir Karnec'i, ew Martiros V. Ērimec'i*, Mxit'arean Tparan, Vienna, 1956.

<sup>104</sup> Nersēs Akinean, *Grigoris A. Kat'olikos Aġt'amarċ'i: keank'n ew k'ert'vacnerē*, Mxit'arean Tparan, Vienna, 1958; Mayis Avgalbegyan, *Grigor Aġt'amarċ'i (XVI d.): usumnasirut'yun, k'nnakan bnagrer, ev canot'agrut'yunner*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakċ'ut'yun, Yerevan, 1963.

<sup>105</sup> V. P. Gevorgyan: *Hovasep' Sebastac'i: Banasteġcut'yunner*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakċ'ut'yun, 1964.

<sup>106</sup> Nersēs Akinean, *Zak'aria Episkopos Gnunc' ew iwr taġerē*, (Azgayin Matenadaran 59) Mxit'arean Tparan, Vienna, 1910.

<sup>107</sup> A. Doluxanyan: *Nerses Mokac'i: banasteġcut'yunner*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakċ'ut'yun, Yerevan, 1975.

<sup>108</sup> Artašes Martirosyan: *Martiros Ērimec'i: usumnasirut'yunner ev bnagrer*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakċ'ut'yun, Yerevan, 1958.



Constantinople); Nafas Yovnat`an (painter as well as possibly aṣuḡ, one time court poet in Tiflis, already often compared with Sayat`-Nova);<sup>109</sup> Pahtasar Dpir (important eighteenth century Constantinople Armenian cultural figure);<sup>110</sup> Sargis Apuč`exc`i (comparatively minor poet in late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries);<sup>111</sup> and finally Petros Lap`anc`i (one of the last main eighteenth century poets composing in classical Armenian).<sup>112</sup>

## Section 5 Studies of early modern Persian poetry

This literature review focuses on the study of so-called “Indian style”, or “Isfahani style”, the prevailing type of elevated poetry composed in Classical Persian, Safavid Azeri, and Ottoman Turkish in both the Ottoman and Safavid domains in the early modern period. Under the impact of new movement of *bāzgasht-i adabī* or “literary return”, which praised the styles of pre-sixteenth century Persian poetry, an important trend from the mid-eighteenth century on, in Iran only, the Indian style fell out of fashion and sometimes became the target of derision or attack. In the Ottoman Empire, however, its popularity survived for longer.

Due to that later belittlement, which continued well into the second half of the twentieth century, most Iranian and foreign scholars tended to neglect or make

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<sup>109</sup> Asatur Mnac`akanyan; Šušanik Nazaryan: *Nafas Hovnat`an: Banasteġcut`yunner*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakč`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1951.

<sup>110</sup> Henrik Baxč`inyan: *Pahtasar Dpir: usumnasirut`yun ev bnagrēr*, Grakanut`yan ev Arvesti T`angarani Hratarakč`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1999; *Pahtasar Dpir: xaġer (liakatar žoġovacu)*, Grakanut`yan ev Arvesti T`angarani Hratarakč`ut`yun, Yerevan, 2007.

<sup>111</sup> Manik Mkrtč`yan: *Sargis Apuč`exc`i: usumnasirut`yun ev bnagir*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakč`utyun, Yerevan, 1971.

<sup>112</sup> Šušanik Nazaryan: *Petros Lap`anc`i*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakč`utyun, Yerevan, 1969.

negatively comments on the “Indian style”, which is unmistakably reflected in E. G. Browne’s *A Literary History of Persia*, Muḥammad Tāqī Bahār’s comments,<sup>113</sup> and is still largely attested in Dhabīḥ-Allāh Ṣafā’s *History of Literature in Iran* and the section “Persian literature in the Safavid period” Ṣafā wrote for the *Cambridge History of Iran*.<sup>114</sup>

From the 1950s, however, first foreign scholars then their Iranian colleagues have begun to display renewed interest in the “Indian style”. In 1958, Alessandro Bausani published an article “Contributo a una definizione dello ‘stile indiano’ della poesia persiana” (Contribution to a definition of the “Indian style” in Persian poetry), in which “he attempted to figure out the characteristics of this style that went beyond simply cataloging verbal usage”.<sup>115</sup> In 1973, Wilhelm Heinz published a monograph exclusively dedicated to the “Indian style”.<sup>116</sup>

Ehsan Yarshater exhibited interest and insight on the formation of the “Indian style” already in his *Persian poetry in the era of Shāhrukh*, first published in 1955.<sup>117</sup> In *Persian Literature*, he provides a good general view of the “Indian style”, not only about its situation in Safavid Iran, but in Moghul India and Ottoman Turkey as well.<sup>118</sup> From the 1980s on, more monographs on the “Indian style” appeared in Iran; for

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<sup>113</sup> For example in his *Sabkshināsī*, vol. 1, chapter 22.

<sup>114</sup> *Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 6, pp. 948-964.

<sup>115</sup> As quoted from W. Hanaway, “The History of Literature”, Chapter 3 of Ehsan Yarshater as general editor, *A History of Persian Literature, vol.1, General Introduction to Persian Literature*, edited by J.T.P. de Bruijn, I. B. Tauris, London and New York, 2009, p. 95.

<sup>116</sup> *Der indische Stil in der persischen Literatur*, F. Steiner, Wiesbaden, 1971.

<sup>117</sup> *Shi’r-I fārsī dar ‘ahd-I Shāhrukh*, Chāpkhānah-i Dānishgāh, Tehran, 1955; repr. 2004; as quoted from Hanaway, op.cit., p. 88.

<sup>118</sup> Ch. 14, “The Indian or Safavid Style: Progress or Decline?”, *Persian Literature*, Bibliotheca Persica, Albany, NY, 1988.

example, Muḥammad Riḏā Shafī'ī Kadkanī's *Persian literature (belles-lettres) from the time of Jāmī to the present day*<sup>119</sup> and *Poetics under the attack of critics: literature criticism in the Indian style*;<sup>120</sup> Ḥasanpūr Ālāshtī's *New trend: style studies of ghazals in the Indian style*.<sup>121</sup>

Since the “Indian style” continued in the Ottoman Empire, which ruled part of historical Armenia and Georgia in the early modern period, an investigation of the Ottoman elevated poetic tradition is in order. Granted the dearth of material in major Western languages, it is still necessary to consult Gibb's *A history of Ottoman Poetry*<sup>122</sup> and the second volume of *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta* on literature of Turkic peoples, in addition to new publications like Walter G. Andrews' *Poetry's Voice, Society's Song: Ottoman Lyric Poetry*.<sup>123</sup> Many articles on the “Indian style” in Ottoman literature have appeared in Turkish, as, for example, Ozan Yılmaz's “Indian style or Turkish style?” (Sebk-i Hindi mi, Sebk-i Türki mi?) in *Türk edebiyatı aylık fikir ve sanat dergisi*, November 2006, issue 397.

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<sup>119</sup> *Adabīyāt-i Fārsī az `aṣr-i Jāmī tā rūzgār-i mā*, Tehran, 1981; repr. 1999.

<sup>120</sup> *Shā'irī dar hujūm-i muntaqidān : naqd-i adabī dar sabk-i Hindī*, Āgah, Tehran, 1996.

<sup>121</sup> *Tarz-i tāzah: sabkshināsī-i ghazal-i sabk-i Hindī*, Intishārāt-i Sukhan, Tehran, 2005.

<sup>122</sup> Gibb, Elias John Wilkinson: *A history of Ottoman Poetry*, in 6 vol.s, Luzac, London, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 1900-1909; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1958-1967.

<sup>123</sup> University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA, 1985.

## Chapter 2

### The bardic Tradition and Sayat`-Nova's Profile

#### Section 1 Profile of the bardic tradition

Sources about the bardic tradition, especially before the seventeenth century, are deplorably poor and the situation does not significantly improve until the nineteenth century, when modern scholarly practices were introduced into the area. Therefore, much concerning the bardic tradition during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries has to be pieced together or even conjectured from later sources, which inevitably raises certain questions about the reliability of the resulting construction. The musical aspect of the bardic art constitutes a separate field and will not feature prominently in this study.<sup>1</sup>

#### A. Origin and Etymology

As explained at the opening of Chapter 1, the *aşuġ/aşık/aşiq* type of bard is associated with a composite performing art, a unity of narration and song to instrumental accompaniment with the appropriate use of gesture. As constituted in the sixteenth century, this tradition is characterized by a Turkic matrix. However, the term *aşuġ/aşık/aşiq* derives from the Arabic form *‘āshiq* (“lover”), the Armenian form *aşuġ*

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<sup>1</sup> References by Armenian authors may be found in Hasmik Inejikian, *Sayat Nova and Armenian Ashoogh musical tradition*, (MA thesis, McGill University, Montreal, 1990), Nikoġos T`ahmizean, *Sayeat`-Novan ew hay gusana-aşuġakan erg-eražštut`iwně*, Drazark Hratarakč`ut`iwn, Pasadena, CA, 1995, Gevorg T`arverdyan collected and A. Nazinyan ed., *Hay gusanner*, Haypethrat, Yerevan, 1957.

emerging from a Turkic intermediary.<sup>2</sup> İlhan Başgöz adduces an important source, which provides grounds for speculating on the possibility of a secular Arab prefiguration of the later bardic tradition. This is found in the *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, composed in 987 CE by the Arab bibliographer Ibn al-Nadīm (ca. 935-990/1). The eighth chapter of the work deals with “the names of passionate lovers during the pre-Islamic period and the period of Islam about whose historical traditions there were books”. According to his explanation, these “passionate lovers (‘ushshāq in Arabic, the plural of ‘āshiq)” refer to “tribal minstrels called ‘āshiq”, who performed “the life stories, legendary or real (or a mixture of both), of the Arab minstrels.”<sup>3</sup> Though this tradition was in circulation in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods, so far no record of it has been found postdating Ibn al-Nadīm in the tenth century, while the current bardic tradition originates in the sixteenth century. Despite the time gap, this new approach raises important issues regarding the origin of the tradition, which merits further investigation.

In his monograph *Hikâye* Başgöz also contextualizes the aşu/aşık/aşiq genre within the development of earlier romance, epic- and story-telling traditions in the Near East. In addition to the Arabic maddāḥ<sup>4</sup> and Persian naqqāl traditions, another important trajectory is sketched by bards of the Parthian *gōsān* type widely disseminated

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<sup>2</sup> The Armenian consonant ʔ renders Oghuz Turkic q in loan words. For this consonantal correspondence, see Andrzej Pisowicz, “How did New Persian and Arabic words penetrate the Middle Armenian vocabulary? Remarks on the material of Kostandin Erznkac`i’s poetry”, *New Approaches to Medieval Armenian Language and Culture*, J.J.S. Weitenberg ed., Rodopi, 1995, pp. 95-110.

<sup>3</sup> Başgöz, 2008, pp. 7-8.

<sup>4</sup> Başgöz has not treated the maddāḥ story-telling tradition among Ottoman Turks in the book in general, on which, see *Encyclopedia of Islam*, “New edition” (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), Brill, Leiden, 1979-1985, vol. V, 1986, pp. 951-953.

in the Persian and Armenian realms in the Late Antique period and beyond.<sup>5</sup> In the Armenian sphere the parallel term *gusan* is attested into the fifteenth century,<sup>6</sup> at which point certain practitioners of the art are referred to by the Turkic form *ozan*, which was later used to refer to the *aşık* as well.<sup>7</sup> Despite certain linguistic problems with the reconstruction, attempts have been made to derive the latter term from the former<sup>8</sup>. Başgöz joins the discussion,<sup>9</sup> arguing that, since the *ozan* tradition bears many similarities with that of the *gusan*, the terms may share the same etymology, and offering his interpretation of the stages in the process.

Since bardic storytelling (*hikâye*) consists of prose narration interspersed with rhymed songs, it is useful to examine earlier examples of such techniques already extant in the Near East. These include *The Arabian Nights* and the related Armenian *Kafa* tradition, which flourished from around the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries.<sup>10</sup> These traditions may afford more plausible and immediate connections with the bardic tradition than those often highlighted but of more distant origin.

Previous scholarship tended to identify the *aşu*/*aşık*/*aşıq* bard as an offspring of the Central Asian Turkic minstrel tradition,<sup>11</sup> associating this with the epic tradition of

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<sup>5</sup> For the Parthian *gusan* tradition, see Mary Boyce, “The Parthian *gōsān* and Iranian Minstrel Tradition,” *JRAS*, 1957, pp. 10-45.

<sup>6</sup> It is difficult to provide first-hand material on this issue. However, since Aṛak`el Siwnec`i used *awzan*=*ozan* in his treaties rather than *gusan*, one might conjecture that the latter term was not in circulation at that time. See Cowe, 1995, p. 43.

<sup>7</sup> Köprülü, “Ozan”, p. 144.

<sup>8</sup> Baxç`inyan, 1987, p. 105.

<sup>9</sup> Başgöz, 2001, p. 234.

<sup>10</sup> Hasmik Simonyan, *Hay miḡnadaryan kafaner (X-XVI dd.)*, Haykakan SSH GA Hratarakç`utyun, Yerevan, 1975.

<sup>11</sup> Fuad Köprülü, “Ozan”, included in *Edebiyat araştırmaları*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara, 1966, pp. 131-144, Başgöz, “From *Gosan* to *Ozan*”, *Turcica*, vol. 38, 2001, pp. 229-235. It should be mentioned that the word *ozan* survived quite tenaciously into the eighteenth century, since famous *aşık* Karacaoğlu was called an *ozan* in a song from 1707. See Cahit Öztelli, *Karacaoğlu, Bütün şiirleri*,

that region, and ultimately, Shamanism.<sup>12</sup> Here, too, Başgöz has weighed in on the debate, arguing against the suggested parallels between shamans and aşiks.<sup>13</sup> According to him, the aşık does not share the same or similar character traits to troubled individuals, as has been postulated for shamans. Nor does the aşık's dream or selection of his profession parallel the shaman's initiatory dreams and ceremony to cure mental illness. Another essential aspect underexplored by proponents of a Central Asian origin is that in much of the literature supporting this view, the storytelling aspect of the tradition, as opposed to the very different style of epic declamation, lacks a comprehensive treatment.<sup>14</sup>

In this connection, some scholars actually applied the term “aşık traditions” to storytelling among the various Turkic peoples in general, as, for example, the Kazakh and Kyrgyz *aqyn*.<sup>15</sup> Yet this categorization is questionable, since, even if these traditions share a common origin with the aşık/aşiq tradition, if we accept the arguments regarding Shamanism and epic, they nevertheless mapped out their own distinct route of development over several centuries and do not necessarily maintain many common religious, thematic, prosodic, or musicological features. Hence, there is no documentation on the Kazakh and Kyrgyz *aqyns*, for example, engaging in the

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Milliyet Yayınları, İstanbul, 1971, p. XIX. It is also found in some modern Turkish dialects, as reflected in Başgöz's article. Another reference worth mentioning is that the Turkish term *ozan* even appeared in Armenian sources in the form of *awzan*, on which see S. Peter Cowe, “Models for the interpretation of medieval Armenian poetry”, *New Approaches to Medieval Armenian Language and Culture*, J.J.S. Weitenberg ed., Rodopi, 1995, p. 43. For the critical edition of the Armenian text, see L. G. Xaç'arean (L. K. Khacheryan as the author himself realizes in English), *Arak`el Siwnec`i (1350-1422 t`t): Yalags k`erakanut`ean hamařawt lucmunk`*, Los Angeles, CA, 1982, p. 84.

<sup>12</sup> See Fuad Köprülü, “*Bahşı*”, included in *Edebiyat arařtırmaları*, pp. 145-156, Başgöz, 2008, *passim*, and Qasımlı, *Ozan aşiq sənəti*, *passim*.

<sup>13</sup> Başgöz, 2008, pp. 94-95.

<sup>14</sup> Başgöz, 2008, pp. 3-13.

<sup>15</sup> An example of such broad definition can be found in Artun, 2011, pp. 26-29.

performance of prose narrative rather than singing or chanting to instrumental accompaniment. Moreover, the content of their narratives is predominantly epic, while in the aşık/aşiq bardic tradition the themes are overwhelmingly romantic.<sup>16</sup>

Most scholars agree now that the aşuî/aşık/aşiq tradition established itself by the sixteenth century when records of such bards begin to appear.<sup>17</sup> To support this view, both Boratav and Başgöz<sup>18</sup> have formed their respective arguments on this formation. Boratav's approach is very innovative. He bases his argumentation on the evolution of poetic forms. According to him, an important support is the significant circulation of the 11-syllable line *koşma*, which is enormously popular among aşiks, at the turn of the sixteenth century, though it is rarely recorded in the early period.<sup>19</sup>

Returning to issues of nomenclature, there is a widespread view associating the application of the term aşuî/aşık/aşiq to bards within the Muslim Sufi mystical tradition.<sup>20</sup> After the rise of Sufism, the term's reference to Sufi practitioners was transferred to bards, since according to Sufi mystical philosophy they are lovers, whose love is God. This usage continues today among various Sufi orders. Even for secular bards the title *Hak aşık/Həqq aşiq* "God's lover"<sup>21</sup> or *Hak Aşığı* "God-inspired lover-poet"<sup>22</sup> is bestowed on those virtuosi, as had been used among Sufi aşık/aşıqs to

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<sup>16</sup> Chadwick and Zhirmunsky, 2010, p. 316.

<sup>17</sup> As reflected in the respective monographs of Köprülü, Günay, Artun, Sahakyan, Qasımlı, all holding this view.

<sup>18</sup> Both Boratav and Başgöz regard the aşık tradition as part of folk literature, which seems the general opinion among Turkish scholars. This issue will be reviewed at the end of this section.

<sup>19</sup> "La littérature des 'aşiq" in Jean Deny et al. ed., *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta*, vol. 2, Aquis Mattiacis Apud Franciscum Steiner, Wiesbaden, 1964, pp. 138-139.

<sup>20</sup> For example, İlhan Başgöz, *Hikâye: Turkish Folk Romance as Performance Art*, Special Publications of the Folklore Institute No. 7, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, 2008, *passim*.

<sup>21</sup> For the Turkish title, see Başgöz, 2008, p. 9 and, for the Azeri one, see Məhərrəm Qasımlı, *Ozan aşiq sənəti*, Uğur, Baku, 2003, pp. 89-117.

<sup>22</sup> For this title, see Başgöz, 2008, p. 197.



address themselves.<sup>23</sup>

The nineteenth-century growth of nationalism in the Ottoman and Tsarist Russian domains and its twentieth-century developments in the Turkish Republic and USSR have spurred a widespread movement among Armenians, Turks, and Azerbaijanis alike to replace the lingering foreign connotations of the Arabic term *aşuġ/aşık/aşıq* with “native” terms in their own languages pertaining to earlier bardic traditions. In the Armenian case, the alternative is *gusan*, while in Turkey and Azerbaijan that of *ozan* as well as *saz şair* (*saz*<sup>24</sup> poet), *halk şair* (folk poet) and less frequently, *müğənni* (singer), *el şair* (folk singer), etc. Ironically, the term *gusan* is ultimately Parthian; while the forms *şair*, *müğənni* etc. are Arabic.

The bardic tradition used to be found over a vast geographic expanse mostly inhabited by the Oghuz Turks, roughly from the Balkans to Iran,<sup>25</sup> however, the focus of this study will be primarily Anatolia and Southern Caucasia and, to a less degree, Iranian Azerbaijan, due to the availability of materials and their historical importance.<sup>26</sup>

## B. An overview of the history of the bardic tradition in the target region

It is regrettable that biographical materials regarding bards tend to be rather sparse,

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<sup>23</sup> Başgöz, 2008, p. 9.

<sup>24</sup> The *saz* is the most important musical instrument in the bardic tradition.

<sup>25</sup> From Zhirmunsky’s description (Nora K. Chadwick; Viktor Zhirmunsky: *Oral epics of Central Asia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2010, p. 316), it seems that the Turkmens have traditions of romance-telling parallel to the Turks and Azeris. Artun also has a very brief description of the “Turkmen aşık tradition” in Artun, 2011, pp. 26-27.

<sup>26</sup> It also briefly covers Algiers, once the major base of Ottoman navy in West Mediterranean, and Georgia where bardic tradition had a tiny branch will be mentioned only when necessary. For a brief reference, see Valeh Hacilar, “*Türkçe söyleyen Gürcü Aşık-şairleri*”, *Bizim Ahıska*, 10 (2011), pp. 40-44; İlyas Üstünyer, “Tradition of the Ashugh poetry and Ashughs in Georgia”, *IBSU Scientific Journal*, 2009, 1(3), pp. 137-149.

particularly for the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, so that the main source for data on them is the text of their songs. In this they differ from elevated poets, whose biographies can be found in *tezkire* collections (memorandum, memoir) in Turkish or the lives (*vark'*) and manuscript colophons of ecclesiastics, who largely filled the ranks of Early Modern Armenian literati. Another complicating factor is that several bards share the same professional name. Thus, there may be at least two Turkish aşiks from different centuries and different locations known by the name Karacaoğlan.<sup>27</sup> Evidence includes anecdotes circulating in the area where a bard flourished and references in later bards' narratives or songs about their illustrious predecessors, such songs comprising the tiny sub-genre of bardic songs called *şairname* (record of poets) in Turkish.<sup>28</sup> Other materials include tangible objects related to them, such as tombstones, manuscripts, etc. In contrast, evidence for the development of the bardic tradition in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is much more profuse, and often serves as the only basis for reconstructing aspects of the earlier period. The overview of the tradition that follows loosely narrates the history of the genre by century without intending any rigid application of that timeframe.

## 1. 1500-1600

This century is generally regarded by scholars as the era when the bardic tradition

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<sup>27</sup> There are different opinions about how many Karacaoğlans there may have been. See Cahit Öztelli, *Karacaoğlan, Bütün şiirleri*, Milliyet Yayınları, İstanbul, 1971, pp. XIII-XXIII, which argues for the single authorship of the songs in the collection. See also Umay Günay, *Türkiye'de Âşık tarzı şiiri geleneği ve rüya motifi*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Akçağ, Ankara, 1999, pp. 185-214, where two different aşık Karacaoğlans from different centuries and origin are differentiated.

<sup>28</sup> The same term is also used in the sense of *tezkire* as well. According to Artun, the first şairnames date back to the seventeenth century (Artun, 2011, p. 303).

ultimately took shape.<sup>29</sup> The Ottoman navy and army as well as Sufi tekkes are the main institutions from this period that preserve the works of contemporary Turkish aşiks. Much of the naval material derives from Algiers, the Ottoman navy's major base in the West.<sup>30</sup> From the scarce record of these early aşiks, we learn that those aşiks served in this navy and were regularly required to perform to improve the sailors' morale.<sup>31</sup> Information also exists about bardic activity in Anatolia and Azerbaijan. Several of the Turkic aşık/aşıqs there have explicit military affiliations, as can be seen from their works, either as soldiers or officers in the Ottoman army or Celali rebels,<sup>32</sup> who were Alevites with Shiite affinities and hence hostile to the former group. A second strain of Eastern aşiks bore strong links to Sufism, e.g. Pir Sultan Abdal in Anatolia, who was an Alevi;<sup>33</sup> and Aşiq Qurbani from the Safavid sphere, who is said to have been at the court of Safavid Shah Ismail for a while and has songs in fervent praise of Shah Ismail Khaṭā'ī.<sup>34</sup> Later, such famous early aşiks, as well as Shah Khaṭā'ī, were to become the subject of aşık songs and heroic or romantic tales, though much of the data

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<sup>29</sup> Various titles, for example, Köprülü, 1962-1965, p. 39 and Artun, 2011, pp. 273-274.

<sup>30</sup> In Köprülü's collection, 5 out of 11 aşiks from this period were navy aşiks. See Köprülü, 1962-1965, pp. 59-64.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> The Celâlî rebellions were a series of Alevi resistance movements against the Ottoman authorities in Anatolia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, of which the first broke out in 1519 under the leadership of Celal, an Alevi preacher. See Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, İslâm Ansiklopedisi Genel Müdürlüğü: *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm ansiklopedisi*, Üsküdar, İstanbul, vol. 7, 1993, pp. 252-257.

<sup>33</sup> Very little is known about his life, except stories and his poetry, in which he always turns out to be an Alevi, participating in the Alevi revolt against the Ottoman Empire under the influence and instigation of the Safavids. See: Artun, 2011, pp. 286-289.

<sup>34</sup> Very little is known about his life. Though he was probably born in a village called Diri, its exact location is still not very clear. Qəzənfər Kazımov, his editor, claims it should be in what is now the Azerbaijani Republic, while others argue for a location currently in Iranian Azerbaijan. See: Qəzənfər Kazımov, *Qurbani*, Bakı Universiteti Nəşriyyatı, 1990, pp. 4-20; Əhliman Axundov et al. ed. in Azeri; Saim Sakaoğlu et al. ed. in Turkish, *Azərbaycan âşıqları və el şürləri*, vol. 1, Halk Kültürü, İstanbul, 1985, p.1. For the fervent pean for Shah Ismail Khaṭā'ī, see: Kazımov, 1990, p. 53.

in these works is fictional.<sup>35</sup> From the sixteenth century onwards, the center for aşık activity in the Iran was Tabriz, center of the Azerbaijan region, an early Safavid power base, and an important longstanding center of international trade. The first Armenian aşuġ, Nahapet K`uĉ`ak,<sup>36</sup> from Xarakunis in the Lake Van area also flourished in this century, of whose Turkish compositions about ten songs in standard aşuġ meters are transmitted, treating themes common in Armenian aşuġ literature.<sup>37</sup> Apart from Nahapet K`uĉ`ak we also hear of the activities of other contemporary Armenian bards like aşuġ Mesihi.<sup>38</sup>

## 2. 1600-1700

Fuad Köprülü designated the seventeenth century as the “golden age” of the Turkish aşık tradition<sup>39</sup> granted the emergence of exponents from a large geographical range and more diversified background. These included at least two of the most prolific and most accomplished pre-nineteenth century Turkish bards, Aşık Gevheri<sup>40</sup> and Aşık Ömer<sup>41</sup> who adopted not only the ‘arūd quantitative meters but also the style of the

<sup>35</sup> For the plots of these stories, see Appendix A: Plot outlines of fifty hikaye romances, *Hikâye*, pp. 217-285.

<sup>36</sup> See Kevork Bardakjian, *A reference guide to modern Armenian literature, 1500-1920: with an introductory history*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, Michigan, 2000, pp. 428-430 and, for the text of the songs, Önnik Ėganyan, “Nahapet K`uĉ`aki hayataġ t`urkeren telerġ”, *Banber Matenadarani*, 5 (1960), pp. 465-481.

<sup>37</sup> His tombstone used to be found in the graveyard of S. T`eodoros Monastery in his home village Xarakunis, which bore his name and the year of death: 1592. See Nairi Zaryan’s account in Hrants`amrazyan ed., *Nahapet K`uĉ`aki banastelcakan ašxarhġ*, Erevani Petakan Hamalsarani Hratarakĉ`ut`yun, Yerevan, 2001, pp. 117-118.

<sup>38</sup> One of exceptions is aşuġ Mesihi, on whom, see Köprülü: “Turk edebiyatinin Ermeni edebiyati üzerindeki tesirleri”, in *Edebiyat arařtırmaları*, 1966, pp. 263-264.

<sup>39</sup> Köprülü, 1966, p. 209.

<sup>40</sup> Little is certain about him apart from data in some of his songs, such as one welcoming the Crimean Khan Selim Giray I to Constantinople, which was written in 1100 A. H./1688-1689 C. E. See Şükrü Elĉin, *Gevheri Divanı*, Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, Ankara, 1984, pp. 11-19 and Artun, 2011, pp. 311-312.

<sup>41</sup> Little is certain about him except that he thrived in this century. This situation is true even in the most comprehensive collection of his works. See Sadeddin Nüzhet Ergün, *Aşık Ömer, Hayatı ve şiirleri*, Semih Lüfi Matbaası Kitap Evi, 1936, pp. 5-14. An brief updated description can be found in

divan literature tradition and became the most prolific and successful among their peers. Sources for aşuġ/ aşıqs in the Iranian domain, however, are relatively few. Two famous Azerbaijani aşıqs flourished in this century: Abbas Tufarġanlı<sup>42</sup> and Sarı Aşıq.<sup>43</sup> This century also witnessed the appearance of Łul Egaz<sup>44</sup> and Łul Arzuni,<sup>45</sup> the first Armenian aşuġs from the important town of New Julfa across the river from the Safavid capital of Isfahan, where they were born in the 1650s. They are also the first extant aşuġs composing in the Armenian language, which thrived in the context of the cosmopolitan atmosphere associated with the international trade network created by the wealthy Armenian khojas.<sup>46</sup> Meanwhile, in the Ottoman Empire, Armenian aşuġs like Vartan and Civan composed songs in Turkish. Unfortunately, records for them are even more meager than those concerning Iranian Armenian bards.<sup>47</sup>

### 3. 1700-1820s

Here it is appropriate to extend the period to the 1820s to include two watershed events, the annihilation of the Janissaries in Constantinople in 1826 and the completion of the Russian annexation of the Southern Caucasia, marked by the treaty of

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Artun, 2011, pp. 305-307.

<sup>42</sup> Little is known about his life except his birthplace, the village of Tufarġan (close to Tabriz), as reflected in his professional name. See Dadaşzadə, Araz: *Abbas Tufarġanlı: 72 şe'r*, Gənclik, Bakı, 1973, p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> Little is known about his life except that his tombstone was discovered in Karabakh in 1927. See further Axundov, Sakaoġlu et al., 1985, vol. 1, p. 41.

<sup>44</sup> Born in the 1650s, little is sure about his life, except that he was circuiting among the Armenian villages around Isfahan with his musical instrument, the chongur; and his tombstone was in the Armenian cemetery there, erected in 1734. See Aram Eremean, *Parskahay aşuġner*, Tiflis, 1930, pp. 2-3.

<sup>45</sup> He was a contemporary of Łul Egaz. But he spent much of his life in Kolkata, India. See Eremean, 1930, pp. 12-13.

<sup>46</sup> For their works, see Aram Eremean, *Parskahay aşuġner: A. Baġer Ōġli, B. Łul Arzuni, G. Łul Sargis Şrişkanc`i, D. Miskin Step`an*, Tparan Surb Amenap`rkič` Vank`i, New Julfa, 1921, *Parskahay aşuġner*, Tiflis, 1930, Hasmik Sahakyan, *Hay aşuġner XVII-XVIII dd.*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakč`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1961, pp. 71-103.

<sup>47</sup> Köprülü, 1962-65, pp. 399, 446-454.

Turkmenchay of 1828, both of which exerted an important influence on the development of the subsequent tradition.

This period tends to be regarded as a stagnant period for the Turkish aşık tradition by modern Turkish scholars.<sup>48</sup> Although aşiks appeared from every social background as in the previous century, and more of their names and works have come down to us thanks to their inclusion from this point in *tezkires* or *şairnames*, none were as prolific or accomplished as Karacaoğlu, Gevheri, or Ömer. Another noteworthy phenomenon is the expanded influence of classical Persian and Turkish poetry on contemporary Turkish aşiks expressed in the use of tropes, allusions, and other literary devices along with the ‘arūd quantitative prosody alongside syllabic prosody.

Across the border in the Iranian sphere of Azerbaijan and South Caucasia, the Azeri aşiq tradition echoes the Ottoman. Famous new aşiqs, for example, Xəstə Qasim<sup>49</sup> appeared in this century, whose life became a theme for later aşiq songs, like Qurbani or Abbas Tufarğanlı in previous centuries. However, their number is less than in the previous century.

The situation is quite different in the case of Armenians. Not only do we have more records of Armenian aşuġs like the Turks and Azeris, but we observe that they span a much larger geographical area from Constantinople to the Armenian Plateau, then on to Isfahan and its surrounding Armenian communities, as well as Tiflis, the three capital cities functioning as centers of Armenian aşuġ activities. Moreover, Armenian aşuġs

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<sup>48</sup> Artun, 2011, p. 324.

<sup>49</sup> Like the famous Azeri aşiqs mentioned earlier, there is little known about his life except that his hometown is Tikmədaş not far from Tabriz. His tombstone is also found in the cemetery there. See Hüseyn İsmayılov et al., *Xəstə Qasim*, Nurlan, Bakı, 2010, pp. 3-4.

have left a more multilingual corpus of composition now embracing not only Turkish and Armenian, but also Georgian and (in very rare cases) Persian. Similarly, the background of those Armenian *ašuġs* is much diversified. Apart from those with an affiliation to the Armenian Apostolic Christians, a few were followers of the Alevi-Bektaşî Sufi order, or at least held a syncretic creed uniting elements of Christianity and Alevism.<sup>50</sup> Probably partly due to the sheer number of Armenian *ašuġs* known to us from this century, their compositions comprise more topics in more diversified styles as well. Many Armenian *ašuġs* from this century seem to have secured their places in modern publications of Armenian literature, e.g. *Yart'un-Öġli*,<sup>51</sup> *Naġaġ Yovnat'an*,<sup>52</sup> *Šamč'i Melk'ō*,<sup>53</sup> and finally, *Sayat'-Nova*.

#### 4. 1820s-1920s

The bardic tradition in this period reflects the change witnessed in the political, military, and cultural history of the region. These were associated with the introduction

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<sup>50</sup> The Bektaşîs like the Mevlevis are quite open to people of all confessions. Therefore participation in their activities cannot be used as an exclusive proof of participants' religious belief.

<sup>51</sup> Born as Yovhannēs Yart'iwnean in the 1760s in a peasant family in the village of Asadabad in the Č'armahal district of Isfahan province, he went to the village school, then learned the *ašuġ* art from *ašuġ* Lul Yovhannēs (c. 1740-1834, the death date is according to his tombstone in the Armenian cemetery in New Julfa: Aug. 16, 1840. See Aram Erimean, *Ašuġ Lul Yovhannēs*, S. Łazar, Venice, 1929, pp. 7-8.), and superseded his master. For a better education, he went to Ejmiacin for some years during his wandering, and claimed that he received divine revelation as a qualified *ašuġ* from S. Karapet (St. John the Predecessor) during his pilgrimage to the S. Karapet Monastery in Mush, which tradition would be explained further later. He died in 1840, and his tombstone is found in the cemetery of Mamuk'a village, Č'armahal. See Aram Erimean, *Ašuġ Yart'un Öġli*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Karō Aġufean, Tehran, 1946, pp. 7-14.

<sup>52</sup> Born in the village of Šorot', Agulis, Nakhichevan in 1661, he was invited to Tiflis by Vakhtang VI, king of Kartli, as court singer and painter between 1703-1712, but returned to Agulis at an unknown time for unknown reasons. He died before Oct. 28, 1722, since his son composed an elegy him at his tomb on that day. See Asatur Mnac'akanyan and Šuġanik Nazaryan, *Naġaġ Hovnat'an: banasteġcut'yunner*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakč'ut'yun, Yerevan, 1951, pp. V-VII.

<sup>53</sup> Little is sure about his life. He might have been born in the 1750s and died after 1821. He called himself as from Tiflis, was an eyewitness to Agha Muhammad Khan's conquest and destruction of Tiflis, when his father Bežan was killed and presented "serfs" to Ejmiacin in 1801. See Levon Melik'set'-Bek, *Šamč'i-Melk'on ev nra hayeren xaġerē*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakč'ut'yun, Yerevan, 1958, pp. 5-15.

of much more powerful Western influence in part connected with Russian expansion and the incorporation of Southern Caucasia area, though the pace of change varied.

The demise of the Ottoman navy, the loss of Maghreb and the disbandment of the Janissaries and ensuing military reorganization led to the rapid decline of military aşiks. In contrast, bardic associations in Constantinople and Alek'sandrapol<sup>54</sup> formed themselves into professional organizations with a guild structure. Meanwhile, a number of bardic centers were established in various areas, many of which continued into the next century, as observed from the records adduced in twentieth-century monographs. Another striking development is that especially in the Russian sphere, under the impact of nationalism, Armenian aşuİs established an Armenian "national" aşuİ tradition distinguished by the promotion of Armenian language in their compositions, gradually leading to a reduction in the use of Turkic dialects.<sup>55</sup> Another characteristic of this period was the inauguration of modern scholarly bardic studies started, as reviewed in the first chapter.

Though some Turkish scholars view the period as a second "golden age" of Turkish aşık art;<sup>56</sup> others consider it the beginning of its decline.<sup>57</sup> Moved by personal taste, the consecutive sultans from Selim III (r.1789-1807) to Abdülaziz (r. 1861-1876), including Mahmud II (r. 1808-1839), who extended patronage to several secular aşiks

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<sup>54</sup> Now Gyumri, Armenia. See Levonyan, 1944, pp. 20-22 and Köprülü, 1962-65, pp. 526-527.

<sup>55</sup> See Yusif Ramazanov, *Azərbaycan dilində yazıb-yaradan erməni aşığıları: XIX əsr*, Elm, Baku, 1976. I was also informed personally by scholars in Baku about a contemporary Iranian Armenian aşuİ from the Urmia region still composing in Azeri. Azerbaijani National Academy of Science, Jun. 5, 2011.

<sup>56</sup> Mehmet Yardımcı, *Başlangıcından günümüze halk şiiri, aşık şiiri, tekke şiiri*, Ürün Yayınları, Ankara, 1998, p. 98.

<sup>57</sup> Artun, 2011, p. 333.



in Constantinople for a good time in this period. Sultan Mahmud II established a formal organization for aşiks in Constantinople.<sup>58</sup> However, certain scholars maintain that after the reign of these sultans the aşık tradition began to lose its importance in cities.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, though aşık art aroused more interest from learned circles in the Tanzimat era (1839-1876), the coffee house in the capital that used to be part of a Janissary monopoly until the latter's disbandment in 1826 and dominated by aşık performance, evolved into the *semâî kahvehane* (cabaret coffee house). People from other backgrounds, especially traditional fire fighters<sup>60</sup> and hoodlums gained the monopoly of those venues.<sup>61</sup> Songs composed by these two groups of city dwellers were made up of manis and semais,<sup>62</sup> in contrast to the aşiks' more diversified repertoire. This led to the collapse of aşık song genres, and might be regarded as a prefiguration of the general decline of the aşık tradition in the Ottoman Empire and future Turkish Republic. During the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876-1908), alafranka, or Western-fashioned music was provided in semâî kahvehanes as well, which might be regarded as a sign of the further decline of traditional aşık performance. After his deposition in 1908 these semâî kahvehanes began to decline as well as part of a process, which came to an end at around 1920. Scholars from this period Rıza Tevfik,<sup>63</sup> Ziya Gökalp<sup>64</sup> and Fuad Köprülü, who

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<sup>58</sup> Köprülü, 1962-1965, p. 527 and Artun, 2011, p. 333.

<sup>59</sup> Artun, *ibid.*.

<sup>60</sup> These people, called *tulumacı* or "pump man" in Turkish, were not modern fire fighters, but rather belonged to a tradition developed locally.

<sup>61</sup> Artun, 2011, p. 333.

<sup>62</sup> Two genres of aşık songs.

<sup>63</sup> (1869-1949), later with the surname Bölükbaşı, Turkish scholar, politician, philosopher and leader of a sect of the Bektaşî community.

<sup>64</sup> (1876-1924), Turkish scholar, writer, thinker and political activist, one of the first advocates for Turkish nationalism.

were often writers and social activists simultaneously, paid much attention to the aşiks and their art. Under the strong influence of nationalism, and dissatisfied with divan literature, which in form and language bore the ubiquitous influence of classical Arabic and Persian literature, these nineteenth-century Turkish intellectuals attempted to create a new national literature in an idiom closer to the language of the people. In this regard, aşık literature naturally attracted them.<sup>65</sup>

Azerbaijan and Southern Caucasus, both Iranian until the Russo-Persian wars, now bifurcate. The territory belonging to modern Iran is badly served by accessible historical data, while material published in Soviet Azerbaijan and now the independent Republic of Azerbaijan only sporadically covers the situation in Iran.<sup>66</sup> As a result, it is largely omitted from my study. Even for Russian Transcaucasia, available sources are too sparse to create a connected narrative.<sup>67</sup> Judging from the few references I have assembled, artistically it seems it remained on the old track, though with innovations and expansion in contents and a certain exposure to elevated literature into sight as well.<sup>68</sup> Trends in the development of the Armenian aşık tradition in the Russian Empire domain, though pursuing a parallel path to those among the Azerbaijanis, embraced more innovative or modernizing steps. This was associated with the greater

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<sup>65</sup> Fuad Köprülü, 1966, p. 225 and Boratav's contribution to *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta*, vol. 2, 1964, pp. 143-144.

<sup>66</sup> It seems the situation is getting improved in the post-Soviet period, together with the enhanced Azeri-Iranian cultural exchange. News covering Iran on the website of Union of Azerbaijani Aşıqs (to be explained later in this section) can be found in ascending frequency on their website: <http://azab.az/xeber/?do=cat&category=xeber>, on which the latest updates are about the establishment of Union of Iranian Aşıqs in October 2015.

<sup>67</sup> For further details, see Araslı, 1960, pp. 84-95.

<sup>68</sup> Namazov, 1983, p. 85.

employment of Armenian language<sup>69</sup> and ašuġ involvement of in enlightening or nationalist trends, in which the key figure was Ašuġ Ĵivani.<sup>70</sup> Among those ašuġs employing Turkic the most accomplished figure was K`ešiř-ōĤi/Keřiřoġlu (1804-1872), a blind ašuġ from Tiflis, who was later brought to Sultan Mahmud II's court to perform in Constantinople.<sup>71</sup>

## 5. From the 1920s on

In general, this period witnessed a decline of the tradition over the whole region. Western (including Russian/Soviet) influence and globalization after WWII have comprehensively transformed conditions in the area. Modern media, for example, publication, sound recording, radio, film, television and internet, have assisted in helpful in spreading the bardic tradition and making it more accessible, but also disseminate more modern cultural forms which thus compete for consumers' time and attention. Consequently, the bardic tradition, whose aesthetic structures were fixed in past centuries, is only one of numerous traditional art forms now gradually disappearing<sup>72</sup> first from major city centers, then regional centers, and ultimately from the rural area. Though writers of the literate tradition initially drew from it in structuring

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<sup>69</sup> The Armenian ašuġs from řirin on began to discard Arabic, Persian, or Turkish loanwords from their compositions. They also started to translate and publish in Armenian stories that till then circulated in Turkic. See: Academy of Science, Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic, *Hay nor grakanut`yan patmut`yun*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakč`ut`yun; relevant chapters: Hasmik Sahakyan, "Ařulakan poezia" in vol. 1, Yerevan, 1962, pp. 269-271; ř. Grigoryan, "Ařulakan poezia" in vol. 4, Yerevan, 1972, pp. 697-698; as well as Levonyan, 1963, pp. 121-123.

<sup>70</sup> See: Grigoryan's chapter in: S. Sarinyan et al. ed., *Hay nor grakanut`yan patmut`yun*, vol. 4, 1972, p. 702; and Levonyan, 1963, pp. 137-145.

<sup>71</sup> He was born as Davit` and changed his professional name at least twice. See Garegin Lewonean, *Hay ařutner*, Tparan Ģeorg S. Sanoyeanc`i, Alēk`sandrapōl, 1892, pp. 26-27 and Xač`ik Amirean, *T`urk`alezu Hay ařutner*, (*ōsmanyan kaysrut`iwn, 16-20rd darer*), J. Kasbarian, Aulnay-sous-Bois, Paris, 1989, pp. 180-181.

<sup>72</sup> For example, Iranian naqqāli and other story-telling traditions in the Middle East.

their plots, especially in the formative period of national literature, its older aesthetics and ethics, based on a more traditional social background differs radically from contemporary trends under the impact of the West. Consequently, this period is marked by the introduction of various measures to preserve the tradition on the part of governments or other political entities, alongside academic efforts. Nevertheless, though these efforts may succeed in propping up the tradition, the continued process of decline is inevitable.

In Turkey, the decline of the aşık tradition in the capital, which had begun in the nineteenth century was completed around 1920,<sup>73</sup> and was then followed by the disappearance of aşiks from traditional ambiances first in other major cities in Western Turkey and finally in Eastern Turkey over a sixty-year process up to the 1980s.<sup>74</sup> Of course aşiks are still around, some being honored by the government as distinguished artists and the recipients of financial support.<sup>75</sup> Actually, politicians in Turkey representing a whole spectrum of political views have connections with aşiks. For example, the Aşık festival celebrated in Konya annually in October from 1965 was originally organized by Konya Aşıklar Derneği, the Society of Aşiks in Konya, an organization for politically more conservative aşiks, established by conservative political parties and individuals.<sup>76</sup>

In Soviet Azerbaijan and the now independent Republic of Azerbaijan, the aşık tradition has received more sustained attention from the government (as well as the

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<sup>73</sup> Artun, 2011, p. 41.

<sup>74</sup> Başgöz, 2008, pp. 214-216.

<sup>75</sup> For example, aşık Veysel. See Başgöz, 2008, p.97.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid..

Communist Party in the Soviet era).<sup>77</sup> As is obvious, oversight, especially in the Soviet era, can never be divorced from political concerns. Besides the promotion of the aşiq tradition as part of Azerbaijani culture, the potential of propaganda through this art form has never been ignored. With all its positive and negative connotations, Azerbaijani aşiq art has at least benefited from financial support and a steady source for its record, study, performance, inheritance and publication. Aşıqs were absorbed into artists' organizations, including the union of writers. Some of them won greater fame, while others were overlooked or even suppressed for political reasons.<sup>78</sup> The aşiq tradition entered the curriculum of the Azerbaijan State University of Culture and Arts, the Azerbaijan National Conservatory, and a number of schools, while research on it has been carried out in the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences and other institutions.<sup>79</sup> A special museum dedicated to the Azerbaijani aşiq tradition was established in Tovuz, a regional town in Western Azerbaijan, where the tradition has been very active and is still alive. Congresses (in Azeri: *qurultay*) of Azerbaijani aşıqs have been held from 1928, of which the last in the Soviet period was held in 1984. Such

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<sup>77</sup> Unfortunately, since the source for Iranian Azeri aşıqs in this period is still poor, it is omitted once again as in the last part. For relevant articles, see İlhan Başgöz, "Turkish *Hikâye*-telling tradition in Azerbaijan, Iran", in Kemal Silay ed., *Turkish folklore and oral literature*, Indiana University Turkish Studies, Bloomington, IN, 1998, pp. 24-42; and Charlotte F. Albright: "The Azerbaijani *Ashiq* and His Performance of a *Dastan*", *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Autumn, 1976), pp. 220-247.

<sup>78</sup> An example of the suppressed aşiq might be Aşiq Mirzə Bilal (1872-1937), who was a representative for the first Qurultay of Soviet aşıqs, but arrested during the Great Purge, and executed as an "enemy of the people." He was only rehabilitated in 1993. See the website of Azerbaijan Aşiq Union: <http://azab.az/qurban/68-aedq-mirzji-bilal.html>, as retrieved on Sept. 4, 2015. Başgöz also reports an Azerbaijani aşiq fled to Turkey during WWII for political asylum, though the exact reason is unspecified. See Başgöz, 2008, p. 75.

<sup>79</sup> Adapted from the Republic of Azerbaijan's nomination for "The Art of Azerbaijani Ashiqs" to UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage: *Nomination for inscription on the Representative List in 2009* (Reference No. 00253), Convention for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage, Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, 4<sup>th</sup> Session, Abu Dhabi, UAE, Sept. 28 – Oct. 2, 2009: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/doc/download.php?versionID=29485> as retrieved on Oct. 13, 2015.

congresses were convened under the Party's organization with the participation of all Soviet republics with an aşiq tradition.<sup>80</sup> From the Stalinist era on, Azerbaijani aşiqs adopted the Soviet tunic as performance attire alongside traditional costumes, which has established itself into the present.<sup>81</sup> This epitomizes the maintenance of many Soviet institutions and practices in the Azerbaijani Republic still. Now international aşiq conferences and contests are held in Azerbaijan, with participants from Iran, Turkey, and other countries. In 2009, Azerbaijani aşiq art was officially registered by UNESCO as an item of intangible world heritage.<sup>82</sup>

The situation in Armenia bears certain similarities with that in Azerbaijan due to parallel conditions under the Tsarist Russian and Soviet rule. Since Jivani's death no new aşuġ has appeared of his caliber. The improvisation tradition among Armenian aşuġs virtually came to an end with the passing of Havasi (1896-1979), the last aşuġ born in the nineteenth century. Likewise, while the aşuġ tradition entered the curriculum of the Komitas State Conservatory of Yerevan alongside the positive aspects of instruction and research on the tradition, the conservatory's primary formative influence from Western art music mediated by Russian has led to the loss of an appreciation of the Near Eastern microtonic system on the part of graduates taught within the confines of the Western well-tempered major and minor scales. Again

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<sup>80</sup> For details can see: Namazov; p. 154; Eyüp Akman: "Stalin sonrası Azerbaycan'da âşık edebiyatı ve âşık kurultayları", *Türkbilig*, 2008 (15), p. 20.

<sup>81</sup> As reflected from the post-Soviet publications in Azerbaijani Republic still, available from the website of Azerbaijan Aşiq Union, *passim*..

<sup>82</sup> As on UNESCO website:

<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00011&RL=00253> as retrieved on Sept. 4, 2015.

probably on the model of Western orchestral structures, *aşuġ* ensembles were created in the Soviet period which still enjoy immense popularity that involve groups featuring several performers on the same traditional instruments, e.g., *tar*, *saz*, *santur*, *kamancha*, *kamani*, *tav kamani* and *dap* to accompany *aşuġ* songs<sup>83</sup> in contrast to the practice in Soviet Azerbaijan, where *aşıqs* still perform in traditional small-scale groups. But after the collapse of the Soviet Union, due to the severe financial stress in the Armenian Republic, it is difficult for such practice to continue. Joint efforts are still being made to further promote the Armenian *aşuġ* tradition, such as performances in both Armenia and abroad, saving songs from oblivion and the revival of improvisation, from scholars and musicians like T`ovma Połosyan, professor of Armenian musical folklore studies at the Komitas State Conservatory of Yerevan from 1987, founder and director of the Sayat-Nova *Aşuġ* Ensemble from 1992, founder of *Ĵivani* School of *Aşuġ* Art from 1997, founder and chairman of Armenian *Aşuġ* Association in 1997.<sup>84</sup> The revival effort also benefits from the support of figures like Vahagn Hovnanian, a famous diaspora Armenian entrepreneur and philanthropist, who established and funded an annual *aşuġ* competition named after Sayat`-Nova in 2000.<sup>85</sup>

### C. The making of bards

#### 1. Prerequisites for becoming a bard

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<sup>83</sup> A list of the instruments in the ensemble can be found on the introductory page to the Sayat-Nova Minstrel Song Ensemble at <http://sayat-nova.org/sayat-nova-ashough-ensemble/>, as retrieved on Sept. 4, 2015.

<sup>84</sup> His introduction on <http://sayat-nova.org/artistic-director/>, as retrieved on Sept. 29, 2015.

<sup>85</sup> He passed away at the end of August, 2015. See <http://www.1tv.am/en/news/2015/08/31/Vahagn-Hovnanian/22100>, as retrieved on Sept. 29, 2015.

On the whole the requirements resemble those in other bardic traditions, i.e. that the candidate should possess a good memory and be able to master the art of singing and playing musical instruments (primarily strings; especially the saz).<sup>86</sup> There seems no prescription regarding their family background, and only a few hailed from a well-off family<sup>87</sup> while even rarer individuals could lay claim to high rank.<sup>88</sup> Blind bards are found from time to time, e.g. the famous early nineteenth-century Armenian *aşuġ* Şirin<sup>89</sup> or the twentieth-century Turkish *aşık* Veysel,<sup>90</sup> but the claim by some scholars that bards were frequently blind is unsupported,<sup>91</sup> as established by Garegin Levonyan's list of Armenian *aşuġ*s up to the late nineteenth century<sup>92</sup> and Erman Artun's list of famous sixteenth-to-twentieth-centuries Turkish *aşık*s,<sup>93</sup> most of whom do not belong to that category.<sup>94</sup> On the contrary, a number of bards were orphaned at a very early age, losing at least one parent, e.g. *Aşuġ* Şirin and *Ĵivani*, but here, too, it is hardly

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<sup>86</sup> Başgöz, 2008, p. 98.

<sup>87</sup> For example, the late nineteenth-century Armenian *aşuġ* Şahir-Xaç'atur, on whom see Grigoryan's chapter in: *Hay nor grakanut'yan patmut'yun*, vol. 4, 1972, p. 704, or the Turkish *aşık* İsha Kemali, on whom see: Başgöz, 2008, pp.72-73.

<sup>88</sup> For example, Kul Mehmed, a sixteenth-century Turkish *aşık*, was born into the family of a pasha. See Köprülü, 1962-1965, pp. 59-60.

<sup>89</sup> (1827-1854) Born as Yovhannēs Karapetean in Koġb, lived and performed in Aleksandrapol and Vaġarşapat. See Š. Grigoryan's chapter on him in: *Hay nor grakanut'yan patmut'yun*, vol. 1, 1962, pp. 273-289.

<sup>90</sup> (1894-1973) Born in the village of Sivrialan in the Sivas province, he first attracted the attention of the local teacher Ahmet Kutsi Tecer (1901-1967, a Turkish scholar and politician) by a song composed for the tenth anniversary of the Turkish Republic, and later won nation-wide fame. See Artun, 2011, pp. 389-391.

<sup>91</sup> Abovean's description in *Verk' Hayastani: X.Abovyan: Erkeri liakatar žolovacu*, vol. 3, HSSR GA Hratarakč'ut'yun, Yerevan, 1948, p. 4. See also Baron August von Haxthausen, "The Armenian way of life", *Ararat*, vol. XXII, No. 4, 1982, p. 11, as excerpted from John Edward Taylor trans., *Transcaucasia: Sketches of the Nations and Races between the Black Sea and the Caspian*, Chapman and Hall, London, 1854. See also Levonyan, 1892, p. 32.

<sup>92</sup> Levonyan, 1892, pp. 16-132.

<sup>93</sup> Artun, 2011, pp. 273-488.

<sup>94</sup> However, among the four Armenian *aşuġ*s known for their storytelling to Levonyan, three of them were blind: T'ujjar, Bangi, Feyradi (Fahrad). In the case of Abovean and von Haxthausen, the blind *aşuġ*s are reported more for their story-telling as well. Therefore, it might be possible that among the Armenian *aşuġ*s who lived more on storytelling in the 19 century, a significant percentage of them were blind. See Levonyan, 1963, pp. 109-110.



possible to draw any significant correlations between their family situation and their becoming a bard.<sup>95</sup> There are reports that Armenian Christian aşufls learned the art from Turkic masters, such as the example of the nineteenth-century Armenian aşufl Zahri who studied with the Turkish aşık master Necmi,<sup>96</sup> though I have not encountered examples in the opposite direction.

Judging from extant written sources, there were hardly any women bards before the nineteenth century.<sup>97</sup> Armenian and Azerbaijani female aşufl/aşıqs first appeared in that century in what are now the republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan. From the available sources, there seems no restriction on what or where they perform.<sup>98</sup> In contrast, even in the mid-twentieth century in Eastern Turkey and Iranian Azerbaijan the concept of a female aşık was still strenuously rejected by locals. Significantly, all six female aşıks listed by Artun were born after 1920s in the Adana, Eskişehir, Çorum, and Sivas provinces, with only the last emanating from inland Anatolia.<sup>99</sup> For the sole case from the Sivas province, it is not clear whether the woman Şahturna is of Alevi-Bektaşî family background.<sup>100</sup> This is important as in that community there are fewer

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<sup>95</sup> Başgöz, 2008, pp.104-109.

<sup>96</sup> Levonyan, 1944, p. 39. I also heard from Prof. Zümrüd Dadaşzadə in Baku on Jun. 5<sup>th</sup> 2011 that she knew of a contemporary Armenian aşufl from Urmia region in the West Azerbaijan Province, Northwestern Iran, who had studied with an Azeri master.

<sup>97</sup> Aşiq Pəri is often labeled as the first woman aşiq. She was from Karabakh and died in 1834. See: Axundov, Sakaoğlu et al. 1985, vol. 1, p. 118. However, in an article of Anna Oldfield Senarslan an even earlier name appears: Aşiq Zərnigar from Derbent, who was the wife of aşiq Valəh. See Anna Oldfield Senarslan, "It's time to drink blood like its sherbet": Azerbaijani women ashigs and the transformation of tradition", *Congrès des Musiques dans le Monde d'Islam*, 2007, p. 2. But this name is otherwise unknown. Levonyan also reported the names of several nineteenth-century female Armenian aşufls such as Maro Naxijevanc`i, Varso Łarsec`i, and T`amar Erevanc`i, on which, see p. 44. I cannot find any biographical reference to them.

<sup>98</sup> Oldfield Senarslan, 2007, pp. 2-3.

<sup>99</sup> Artun, 2011, pp. 480-488.

<sup>100</sup> Artun, 2011, pp. 483-484.

restrictions on women's activities. According to Başgöz, since the term aşık denotes a person in the throes of passionate love, it would be considered a disgrace for a Muslim woman before marriage. But even a married one would expose herself to serious pressure from the men. "Only after the 1960 Turkish constitution was ratified guaranteeing human rights and civil liberties to all citizens did women aşiks, mainly from Alevi groups, begin to join aşık organizations and participate in concert tours with male aşiks. Yet even after this, there are no reports of a single woman aşık narrating hikaye."<sup>101</sup>

Until WWI, bards from a Sufi background propagating their religious beliefs by way of bardic performance were not rare. However, subsequently radical changes in both Soviet domains and the Turkish Republic have significantly reduced their numbers now. At the same time, hikaye story telling, or in some cases secular aşık/aşiq performance in general is opposed by conservative Muslim clerics.<sup>102</sup>

## 2. Reasons for becoming a bard

Due to the scarcity of biographical details this topic is much less documented for sixteenth to eighteenth century bards. Fortunately, in sharp contrast to them, many modern bards have recorded their own account about how they became a bard. The most easily available recent collection of these stories is, perhaps, the corresponding section in İlhan Başgöz's study *Hikâye*.<sup>103</sup> In these narratives the most prominent

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<sup>101</sup> Başgöz, 2008, pp.208-209.

<sup>102</sup> As reported by Başgöz, in the 1960s, some conservative mullahs in Tabriz were still opposed to the aşıqs' singing and storytelling. See "Turkish *Hikâye*-telling tradition in Azerbaijan, Iran", in Kemal Silay ed., *Turkish folklore and oral literature*, Indiana University Turkish Studies, Bloomington, IN, 1998, p. 27.

<sup>103</sup> Başgöz, 2008, pp. 71-92.

theme is love, either for a concrete person, who in Eastern Anatolian cases is always a girl,<sup>104</sup> or for the aşık art itself.<sup>105</sup> Still, Başgöz convincingly argues that the rationale for becoming a bard is usually varied<sup>106</sup>. Besides love, poverty is mentioned frequently as a motivating factor. The revealing dream is a common topic for Muslim bards when discussing their selecting this type of career, but there are grounds for querying the significance of this bardic convention, which will be reviewed in a later section.

### 3. Training of a bard

This process is a less discussed, too, especially for the Early Modern period, also because of the relative paucity of sources.

Though a boy could become interested in the art from a very young age, training usually began only from adolescence, and lasted several years.<sup>107</sup> According to some Turkish scholars,<sup>108</sup> the process can be divided into three periods: apprenticeship, novitiate, and becoming a master.<sup>109</sup>

In the first phase apprentices merely learn from the master, mainly hearing and reproducing<sup>110</sup> the stories (hikayes) and lyrical poems, either as a component of the stories or as independent pieces, either composed by the master himself or by other famous bards, and playing musical instruments. Many bards were literate, since it is

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<sup>104</sup> Başgöz, 2008, p. 98.

<sup>105</sup> As in the case of aşık İshak Kemail, Başgöz, 2008, p. 78; However, if the revealing dream, as to be discussed later, is not always dependable, as Başgöz has revealed; then the credibility of such account, involving love for a girl and a revealing dream simultaneously, should be questionable, too.

<sup>106</sup> According to aşık Üzeyir Püünhani's own comment in Başgöz, 2008, pp. 82-83.

<sup>107</sup> As observed from the life stories in Başgöz, 2008, pp. 82-85.

<sup>108</sup> For example: Artun, 2011, pp.55-58.

<sup>109</sup> Their respective Turkish forms are: *çırak yetiştirme* (or *kapılanma*), kalfalık and ustalık. See Artun 2011, pp. 61-64.

<sup>110</sup> There is no proof that any written material, for example, the master's defter, were used additionally.

often necessary to take down the poems as an aid in memorization. The masters would take apprentices to visit other bards to provide them with opportunities to learn from others as well. We hear that apprenticeship was rigid and strict, and that by no means all the apprentices finally become masters. Indeed, sometimes the percentage of elimination was very high.<sup>111</sup>

The novitiate phase started with the performance of a song composed by the master to the accompaniment of a saz in front of an audience. In this phase the novice could perform existing pieces publicly while continuing to study and improve his knowledge and technique in preparation for future creative activities after graduating.<sup>112</sup> On completing all the requirements and being considered well qualified by the master, the novice would advance to the status of master and begin to perform independently, composing new stories, poems, or melodies on his own before accepting apprentices of his own.<sup>113</sup>

There are two issues of some importance to address here. First, in some cases the disciple's daily expenses were covered by the master, so that if the disciple received any reward from the audience for a performance before he qualified, he might have to transfer the prize either as cash or in kind to his master as a token of gratitude and respect.<sup>114</sup> Second, in many cases, in addition to his bardic career the disciple would have other means of support often more lucrative than being a bard.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> An example: among famous modern Azerbaijani asiq Ələsgər (1821-1926)'s about thirty disciples, only two completed. See Həkimov, 2006, p. 514; Artun, 2011, p. 63.

<sup>112</sup> Artun, 2011, p. 63.

<sup>113</sup> Artun, 2011, p. 64.

<sup>114</sup> Həkimov, 2006, p. 513.

<sup>115</sup> Başgöz, 2008, pp. 95-96.

4. Conventions governing the graduation from bardic training: examinations, dreams, pilgrimages, assuming a professional name (*makhlaş*), and becoming a master

Again records relating to these activities are scarce and scattered and have to be collected from Turkish, Armenian, and Azeri sources mostly from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and collated. Therefore, every aspect of this composite synthesis may not be completely representative of the tradition as a whole.

A. Examination: Coverage of this theme is largely dependent on Garegin Levonyan's description of nineteenth-century Armenian *aşuġs*.<sup>116</sup> When a disciple felt himself well prepared to become a master, he would apply to the chief of the local master *aşuġs* (called *ustabaşı* as in Turkish in Alek'sandrapol) to be examined with the prior agreement of his own master. The examination would take place in the coffee house, where the disciple's master performed. On a set date, time, and place the examinee would welcome the assembly of the master *aşuġs*, and the examination began. The disciple would have to answer questions from master *aşuġs* first, then perform both songs and instrumental music. If the masters considered him qualified, the doyen of the local master *aşuġs* would call him forward and give the disciple a full slap on the cheek, signifying that he was qualified to use the title master. The successful disciple would kiss him in return<sup>117</sup> and express his gratitude to all the master *aşuġs*. After the

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<sup>116</sup> But it should fit the Azerbaijani case at least, if it is not equally applicable to the Turks; since it has been quoted in Azerbaijani monographs with the comment "Armenians took this holy tradition of ours with great trickiness too; even certify it at state level". See Həkimov, 2006, p.514-515. Unfortunately, I have not seen any account from Azeri monographs more detailed than Levonyan's.

<sup>117</sup> According to Həkimov, he kisses both the *ustabaşı* and his own master's hands. See Həkimov, 2006, p. 515.

examination, a press release would be prepared for publication.<sup>118</sup>

B. Revealing dream and/or pilgrimage: The dream motif is important for bards, perhaps even more so in the Early Modern period when religion played a more significant role in the daily life of the Near East.<sup>119</sup> According to certain traditions it is possible for a bard to begin his career through the guidance of a revealing dream or to master the bardic art after such a dream. These dreams were always connected with a saint or even a pilgrimage. Here some differences emerge between Turkic and Armenian convention.

In the known Armenian cases, all of which predate the twentieth century, the saint is St. John the Precursor (Baptist) (in Armenian, Surb Karapet) who is regarded as the patron saint of Armenian *aşuġ*s<sup>120</sup>. The pilgrimage then relates to his shrine at the Mšō Sult'an Surb Karapet Monastery near the city of Mush. The background to the dream is quite straightforward and almost formulaic. After a period of study and practice when the apprentice is already quite good at his art, the would-be *aşuġ* would go on the pilgrimage to Mush. After visiting the monastery he would receive a dream, in which St. John the Precursor himself appeared and qualified him as an *aşuġ*, often after the would-be *aşuġ* had completed the Precursor's own ordeal for him. Among the many bards to receive their revealing dream during/after such a pilgrimage were Łul

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<sup>118</sup> Levonyan, 1944, pp. 22-23.

<sup>119</sup> So far the lengthiest monograph on this topic is probably Umay Günay's *Türkiye'de Âşık tarzı şiiri geleneği ve rüya motifi* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Akçağ, Ankara, 1999), which devotes about 80 pages (pp. 78-156) to the dream motif.

<sup>120</sup> Theo van Lint, "The gift of poetry: Khidr and John the Baptist as patron saints of Muslim and Armenian *Âşiqs* – *Aşuġs*", *Redefining Christian identity: cultural interaction in the Middle East since the rise of Islam*, J. J. van Ginkel, H. L. Murre-van Den Berg, T. M. van Lint ed., Uitgeverij Peeters en Department Oosterse Studies, Leuven-Paris-Dudley, MA, 2005, p. 349.

Yovhannēs and Yart`un-Ōlli. The latter's dream was passed down by his fellow villagers, reported to Aram Eremean and published. According to this tradition, Yart`un-Ōlli paid a pilgrimage to Mšō Sult`an Surb Karapet Monastery, historically the second holiest pilgrimage site on the Armenian Plateau after Ējmiacin, primatial see of the Armenian Apostolic Church.<sup>121</sup> There, one night he identified a young man as St. John the Precursor who approached him with a load of cooked millet for him to carry to the mountaintop, which task he fulfilled. On its completion, Yart`un-Ōlli received the saint's blessing and qualified as a full-fledged ašuĬ.<sup>122</sup>

I have not encountered any description of revealing dreams and pilgrimage in Azeri monographs. As for Turkish aşiks, the dream can be subdivided into two types: the first, which is obviously the mainstream, as indicated by its close parallels to Armenian practice, occurs after a period of study, while the second, whose authenticity is extremely doubtful, actually appears to the would-be aşık before embarking on study. The most common formula for the dream is that a youth meets the saint(s) in the dream in which the latter introduce(s) the former to a girl, who may be the love of the young man in real life and require(s) him to drink a love potion that she offers him. Next morning, when the young man wakes and remembers the dream, he realizes that he has been conferred the ability to be an aşık, a God-inspired poet-lover, by divine revelation.<sup>123</sup> The revealing dream would occur at various places, e.g. beside the tomb

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<sup>121</sup> The importance of the monastery is reflected from its large and illustrated image in a seventeenth-century map for Armenian pilgrims. See Gabriella Uluhogian: *Un'antica mappa dell'Armenia: Monasteri e santuari dal I al XVII secolo*, Longo editore Ravenna, Ravenna, 2000, p. 107.

<sup>122</sup> Aram Eremean, *AšuĬ Yart`un Ōlli*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.: Karō Ašufean, Tehran, 1946, p. 12.

<sup>123</sup> Başgöz, 2008, p. 110.

of a pir or sheikh, in the would-be aşık's home, or elsewhere. It might happen at a specific date/time, e.g. the anniversary of a saint,<sup>124</sup> or over a period of time,<sup>125</sup> repeatedly over several years.<sup>126</sup> The saints to whom the would-be aşiks refer are more diversified<sup>127</sup> as well. The most common is Saint Khidr,<sup>128</sup> who is regarded as the saint of eternal life, followed by Prophet Ilyās (Elijah) in second place and then by other saints like “The Seven Holy Ones”<sup>129</sup>, the “Three Dervishes”,<sup>130</sup> etc. In rarer cases the saint's appearance is substituted by pieces of paper with writing on them.<sup>131</sup>

Important parallels are to be observed among the three saints St. John the Precursor, Elijah, and Khidr, that are most frequently involved among both Christians and Muslims. Van Lint has demonstrated that despite different origins the three possess the same ability to grant poetic inspiration. In common beliefs among Turkish Muslims, Khidr and Ilyās often come together, or are simply identified, while in the Judeo-Christian tradition, Elijah and John the Baptist are both considered forerunners of the Messiah. The granting of inspiration is an age-old topic among many ancient peoples. The veneration of John the Baptist as the patron saint of poets among Armenians

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<sup>124</sup> Aşık İhsani, in a book he published in 1957, claimed that his revealing dream took place in the night of the birthday of Muhammad, as quoted from Başgöz, 2008, p. 80. However, since he has more than one versions of the dream himself, and later confessed for his fake in previous writings to Başgöz during interview, the credibility of this claim is very doubtful.

<sup>125</sup> For Aşık İhsan Kemali's account, see Başgöz, 2008, p. 78.

<sup>126</sup> Aşık Sabit Müdâmi says that he had the same dream when he was 7 and 14 years old, which made him an aşık. See Başgöz, 2008, p. 78.

<sup>127</sup> Beside the records in Başgöz, 2008, pp. 77-82, collected from printed sources and Başgöz's interview with the aşiks, Umay Günay has collected stories about revealing dreams from hikayes or real aşiks' biographies, in *Türkiye'de Âşık tarzı şiiri geleneği ve rüya motifi*, pp. 100-153. The plots are similar.

<sup>128</sup> In Turkish, spelled as Hızır. Here I follow Theo van Lint's spelling, since his article is the most quoted document in the discussion about this saint.

<sup>129</sup> For one of aşık Yaşar Reyhani's accounts, see Başgöz, 2008, p. 79 and, for Başgöz's explanation of these two terms, see *ibid.*, p. 289.

<sup>130</sup> Aşık Behçet Mahir's account, Başgöz, 2008, pp. 81-82.

<sup>131</sup> Also from aşık İhsan Kemali's account: Başgöz, 2008, p. 78.



predates the inception of the bardic tradition in the sixteenth century.<sup>132</sup> Though it is difficult to claim any syncretism or cross-influence between John the Baptist and Khidr, the close parallels are noteworthy.

From the description above it can be concluded that the revealing dream is an essential step to becoming a bard, if not the only step. Naturally, the credibility of such dreams has fallen under suspicion in modern times, as illustrated by Başgöz.<sup>133</sup> Though some bardic candidates might experience the phenomenon in a heightened psychological state, since the dream has long been regarded as an indispensable step to becoming an aşık.<sup>134</sup> However, in certain cases aşıks might attempt to “produce” or “summon” such a dream, rather than waiting for the revelation to appear.<sup>135</sup> Others even admit that such dreams, whether envisioned by themselves or other aşıks, are simply faked in order either to arouse their audience’s curiosity, or to satisfy the audience, otherwise the deeply religious would pay no heed to the aşıks’ artistic perfection.<sup>136</sup> In other cases aşıks would even concoct such a dream *ad hoc* to satisfy anyone probing more deeply into their qualifications to be a bard.<sup>137</sup> At all events, Başgöz’s argument is irrefutable that, whether the dream exists or not, it is simply impossible for anybody to master the art without years of arduous practice.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> An example is thirteenth-century poet Yovhannēs Erznkac’i’s invocation to Surb Karapet at the end of one of his poems, as quoted from van Lint, 2005, p. 355.

<sup>133</sup> Başgöz, 2008, pp. 110-115.

<sup>134</sup> Başgöz, 2008, p. 111.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. As Başgöz reports, Aşık Nesimi, during his obsession for such a dream, drank a glass of salty water before going to bed every night, since he believed that the salt would make him thirsty, and in its turn would compel him to drink the love potion in the dream.

<sup>136</sup> Başgöz, 2008, pp. 77, 81, 111.

<sup>137</sup> Başgöz, 2008, pp. 111-112.

<sup>138</sup> Başgöz, 2008, p. 112.

C. The practice of assuming a professional name (*makhlaş*) was common among Muslim literary poets and was once almost a requisite for bards of all ethnic backgrounds. In the past, the master would confer the name on the new bard, but more recently some bards choose it for themselves.<sup>139</sup>

The professional name<sup>140</sup> might derive from the bard's family name or surname (*Dadaloğlu*; *Yart'un-Ölî*<sup>141</sup>), hometown (*Magriplioğlu*; *Şirak*), life story or lifestyle (*Köroğlu*;<sup>142</sup> *Et'im-Ölî*<sup>143</sup>), profession or craft (*Katibi*;<sup>144</sup> *Zarkyar*<sup>145</sup>), physical appearance (*Benli Ali*<sup>146</sup>), confession (*Mesihi*<sup>147</sup>), personal qualities, whether complimentary or derogatory (*Fakirî*;<sup>148</sup> *Igit*<sup>149</sup>), etc. It seems that from the late nineteenth century on, some bards are known simply by their real names.<sup>150</sup> The norm in the bardic tradition was to employ names of Arabic/Persian/Turkic origin until the late nineteenth century, though earlier references to some Armenian *aşu*İs as *Vartan*, *Civan*, etc. in Turkish sources probably denote their performance name.<sup>151</sup> Though the employment of professional names of Armenian origin has expanded after the

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<sup>139</sup> Artun, 2011, p. 65.

<sup>140</sup> The professional names appearing here are taken from Ertun, 2011, p. 65, and various sources. Not all of them are explained or furnished with references.

<sup>141</sup> This is the Azeri translation of his surname *Yarut'iwnean* in New Julfan dialect form. Note the employment of patronymics as means of designating family ties.

<sup>142</sup> Turkish: "Son of the blind man".

<sup>143</sup> Turkish: "Son of the orphan", professional name of a nineteenth-century Armenian *aşu*İ.

<sup>144</sup> Turkish: "Of a scribe".

<sup>145</sup> Persian-Turkish: "Goldsmith", professional name of a nineteenth-century Armenian *aşu*İ.

<sup>146</sup> *Benli*: Turkish "spotted (face)".

<sup>147</sup> An Arabic loanword in Turkish for a Christian.

<sup>148</sup> Turkish: "Of a pauper".

<sup>149</sup> Turkish: "Brave", professional name of a twentieth-century Armenian *aşu*İ.

<sup>150</sup> As on the Union of Azerbaijani *Aşıqs*' webpage of nineteenth to twentieth centuries. *aşıqs*: İdris Məhərrəmov (1894-1940), İlqar Nəcəfov (1968- ), etc.: <http://azab.az/ustad>, as retrieved on Oct. 13, 2015.

<sup>151</sup> Köprülü, 1962-1965, pp. 399, 446-454.

generation of Ĵivani,<sup>152</sup> both coincide into the contemporary period, examples of the former being ašuĴs Igit`, Zulal, Šahen, and Leyli, and of the latter, Gusan Ašot, Bagrat, Eraz, etc.

D. A bardic career would not exclude the bards' pursuing other sources of income, which might even become their economic mainstay. Bařgöz reports various second jobs the aşıks he interviewed held as farmer, small business owner, livestock feed seller, cattle raiser, doorkeeper, bus conductor, etc.<sup>153</sup>. Of course, a devoted performer could well abandon his previous occupation to become a bard full-time. One exceptional example is the 18-19 century Isfahani Armenian ašuĴ Łul Yovhannēs, who ended his career as an architect and to devote himself fully to being ašuĴ in his later years.<sup>154</sup>

#### D. Bardic organizations

This aspect of the tradition has received much less discussion. Reports on such organizations before WWI are scattered and usually brief. Garegin Levonyan provided the most in-depth coverage based on the Armenian ašuĴ organization in Alek'sandrapol. The trade union<sup>155</sup> there was characterized by its statutes, with an administrative body elected by general vote, under the leadership of an *ustabaši*. The organization had a treasury funded by its members' monthly dues for money-lending. In addition to receiving the local *ustabaši's* consent ašuĴs from outside were required to pay the

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<sup>152</sup> Levonyan, p. 45. As for modern and contemporary Armenian ašuĴs' stage names, see the list on Sayat-Nova Cultural Union's webpage <http://sayat-nova.org/ashughs/>, as retrieved on Sept. 4, 2015.

<sup>153</sup> As shown from Bařgöz's interview with Turkish aşıks, see Bařgöz, 2008, pp. 95-98.

<sup>154</sup> See Eremean, 1929, p. 8.

<sup>155</sup> This is the literal translation of Levonyan's term *arhestakc`akan miut`yun*.

equivalent of three months' member's dues to the treasury to perform in the city.<sup>156</sup> This structure betrays all the features and norms of a guild (*hamk`arut`yun* in Armenian) as constituted at that time in the Near East.

Related to organizations is the issue of bardic jargons only raised by Levonyan.<sup>157</sup> According to him, there is a kind of secret language among Armenian *aşuġs* known as *t`ars lezun* in Armenian.<sup>158</sup> Its main feature was the metathesis of letters in content words. For example, *ōr* (day) becomes *ro*, *ser* (love) *res*, *luys* (light) *suyl*, *sirun* (handsome) *risun*, *xanum* (woman) *nuxam*, *manuřak* (violet) *řanumak*, *mxit`arank`* (consolation) *xmit`arank`*, etc. Structural words, reflexive affixes, and syntax were unaffected. Levonyan gives a detailed description of it but no indication of its origin. One might speculate that such a practice was not unique among Armenian *aşuġs*, but in broader circulation among bards. Clearly Levonyan was in a unique position to discuss such phenomena, being the son of Ĵivani, the most famous and accomplished Armenian *aşuġ* at the turn of the twentieth century, thus gaining access to much insider information inaccessible for scholars in general.

Köprülü reports that Sultan Mahmud II established a formal organization for *aşiks* in Constantinople as one of the *loncas*, or guilds of artisans, whose head was an *aşık* chosen by the government from the *aşiks* gathering in a coffee house in the neighborhood of Tavukpazarı, the largest place in the city for *aşiks* to gather, who bore

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<sup>156</sup> Levonyan, 1944, p. 22.

<sup>157</sup> Levonyan, 1963, pp. 197-199.

<sup>158</sup> This term *t`ars* of Turkish origin should mean "opposite". See Hrač`ya Ačarıyan, *Hayeren armatakan bařaran*, vol. II, Erevani Hamalsarani Hratarakč`ut`yun, 1963, p. 162, under the entry *t`arsel*.

the title of *âşık kâhyası*, or “aşık housekeeper”. Another official with the title *reis-i âşikan/âşıklar reisi* (“head of the aşiks”) was employed by the government to control local aşiks and to use them for propaganda.<sup>159</sup>

Available sources for bardic organizations in the twentieth century are even scarcer. Başgöz indicates that an organization called *Aşıklar Derneği* (Society of Aşiks) existed in Turkey in years 1961-1971, which was “supported politically and organizationally by the Turkish Labor Party, and turned into a vigorous protest movement, and shut down after the 1971 military coup.”<sup>160</sup> Similarly, the Konya Aşıklar Derneği (Society of Aşiks in Konya) referred to above was established by Fevzi Halıcı in 1964 with support from conservative political powers.<sup>161</sup>

In Azerbaijan it seems no official organization for aşıqs existed before the Union of Azerbaijani Aşıqs (Azerbaijani: *Azərbaycan Aşıqlar Birliyi*) was established in 1983 under the Ministry of Culture<sup>162</sup> since the three prior congresses were convened by other institutions, e.g. the Central Executive Committee of the AzSSR or the Azerbaijani Writers’ Union.<sup>163</sup> Judging from fragmentary reports, it seems the Union of Azerbaijani Aşıqs functioned by and large like the writers’ unions and similar organizations during the Soviet period. It continues into the Post-Soviet period.<sup>164</sup> As for the situation in Armenia, it seems a separate aşuſs’ union might not even exist in the

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<sup>159</sup> Köprülü, 1962-1965, pp. 526-527. He had more detailed description about the situation in an article “Âşık fasılları” (*İkdam*, Apr. 25<sup>th</sup> 1914), which is part of his series “Saz şâirleri” in a newspaper unavailable to me. Some parts of this article are quoted from Günay, 1999, pp. 32-34.

<sup>160</sup> Başgöz, 2008, p. 97.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid..

<sup>162</sup> Oldfield Senarslan, 2007, p. 19.

<sup>163</sup> Namazov, 1983, pp. 154-184.

<sup>164</sup> See their website: [www.azab.az](http://www.azab.az) , as retrieved on Sept. 4, 2015.

Soviet period, since T`ova Połosyan became the founder and first chairman of this organization only in 1997, as mentioned before.

#### E. Classification of bards according to their ambience

Traditionally, scholarly monographs classify aşu/aşıks in accordance with their ambience since the milieu of performance is affiliated with their social milieu.<sup>165</sup>

##### 1. City/town bards

From the nineteenth century on these bards attracted academic interest and became the object of scholarly study,<sup>166</sup> Their chief milieu was the coffee house, tavern, or similar establishments (for example, caravanserais). In many cases urban bards performed with small bands of 3 or 4 instrumentalists, most of whom were *sazandars*, or performers of stringed instruments. The band might be named after its conductor.<sup>167</sup> According to Başgöz, many of them were associated with or had contracts with certain coffee houses or other performing establishments,<sup>168</sup> but some would wander from town to town to perform or follow go on circuits as well.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Levonyan, 1944, pp. 16-33 and Artun, 2011, pp. 48-55. In contrast to Armenian and Turkish scholars, Azerbaijani scholars tend to classify aşıqs according to their creativity, which is the only kind of aşıq classification in all the Azeri monographs I have encountered. According to Namazov (1983, pp.85-86), aşıqs can be divided into three levels: master or composing aşıq (*ustad aşıq* or *yaradıcı aşıq*), poet-aşıq (*el şair*) and performing aşıq (*ifaçı aşıq*). Aşıqs of the first level are specialized in the art, can play saz, compose poems and stories; second level aşıqs reside more on composing poems and stories; while the last level aşıqs in most cases can learn and perform already existing works only.

<sup>166</sup> When Başgöz was conducting his fieldwork about Turkish aşıks, this was already the only group of aşıks, whom he met, though the great majority of those aşıks were of village origin. This group, too, was undergoing decline. See Başgöz, 2008, esp. pp. 24-94, 214-216.

<sup>167</sup> Levonyan, 1944, pp. 19-20.

<sup>168</sup> At the same time, performing at weddings is an indispensable part of the aşıks' function as well. See Başgöz, 2008, p.167.

<sup>169</sup> Levonyan, 1944, p. 28. But he did not explain whether those aşu/ş associated with coffee houses performed on this circuit sporadically as well.

The coffee house is of quintessential importance for bardic performance in the Near East as taverns and other places where wine or alcohol is sold had long become the monopoly of non-Muslims, granted that wine is haram for Muslims since, according to the Sharia, they are forbidden entry to such places. In contrast, coffee houses could be owned and operated by people of all confessions, hence becoming a better space for people of different confessions to mix.<sup>170</sup> It thus became an ideal place for bards to gather, perform, and improve their art by learning from each other and other art forms. The coffee house appeared in the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century and was accepted in Constantinople by the middle of the same century.<sup>171</sup> It immediately became a gathering place for intellectuals from all over the empire,<sup>172</sup> as well as Sufis, however, it experienced a decline in the bardic tradition over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>173</sup>

Under the rubric of city/town aşuſ Levonyan actually identifies five subtypes, of which four have little to do with coffee houses or taverns. Instead those bards have income from other sources.<sup>174</sup> However, based on Levonyan's book, it seems that the

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<sup>170</sup> For example, Baſgöz reports that a balaban (to be explained in the section on musical instruments) player for an Azeri aşiq whom he met in Tabriz was Arakel, an Armenian. See "Turkish *Hikâye*-telling tradition in Azerbaijan, Iran", Baſgöz, 1998, p. 33.

<sup>171</sup> "In Istanbul and Rûmili coffee first appeared in the reign of Sulaymân I (926/1520-974/1566). In 962/1544 a man from Aleppo and another from Damascus opened the first coffee houses (*kahwe-khâne*) in Istanbul. These soon attracted gentlemen of leisure, wits, and literary men seeking distraction and amusement, who spent the time over their coffee reading or playing chess or backgammon, while poets submitted their latest poems for the verdict of their acquaintances. This new institution was also jokingly called the mekteb-i 'irfân (school of knowledge). The coffee house met with such approval that it soon attracted civil servants, *kādīs* and professors also". *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, vol. IV, Leiden, 1978, p. 451.

<sup>172</sup> Artun, 2011, p. 40.

<sup>173</sup> This paragraph is mainly based on Artun, 2011, pp. 42-44.

<sup>174</sup> Levonyan, 1944, p. 28 and Baſgöz, 2008, pp. 95-97. Baſgöz also observes the change in these aşiks' income in the 20 century. Some of them publish their works and sell them for money, while others receive funding from the government or political organizations. These changes take place in Turkey from the 1940s, while in the Russian Empire or the Soviet Union, similar changes may have

Armenian *ašuġs* then performing in coffee houses were rather professional artists, without a regular income, whose earnings consisted of coffee house patrons' voluntary donations, as well as weddings and feasts, where they were invited to perform.<sup>175</sup>

The second group<sup>176</sup> was sedentary,<sup>177</sup> part-time *ašuġs* lacking accompanying bands, who were more often known as narrators (*asac`oġ*). They would perform purely at family gatherings or festivities, thus adding private residences as a milieu for bardic performance. Their performances included stories, rhymed compositions, and improvised quatrains about well-known figures, all in a light vein.

Apart from solo narrators, Levonyan also identified a type of dialoguing or antiphonal *ašuġs*, called the narrator and speaker (*patmoġ* and *asoġ*) respectively, who would perform in the open air, in the courtyards of churches and caravanserais, squares, crossroads, street corners, etc.. According to Levonyan, they performed famous Eastern romances like Ashik Kerib, K  roġlu, etc., deriving from the common stock-in-trade of all bards<sup>178</sup> with one of them playing the saz. Levonyan has vivid descriptions of such open-air performance.<sup>179</sup> These are complemented by that of Gri  a  vili.<sup>180</sup> According

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taken place earlier.

<sup>175</sup> Levonyan, 1944, p. 20. Ioseb Gri  a  vili reports similar *a  iks* in Tiflis. The milieu for these *a  iks* is set in coffee houses, they would tell Eastern heroic adventure stories like K  roġlu, Ashik Kerib, Shah Ismail, etc. in accompany of their saz for hours without pause. See Ioseb Gri  a  vili, H  a  `ya Bayramyan, Matin K   aramyan trans.: *Hin Tiflisi grakan Bohem  * (Dzveli Tbilisis literaturuli bohema), Merani, Tbilisi, 1989, p. 64.

<sup>176</sup> Levonyan, 1944, p. 28.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid. this is the literal translation of the word he chose: *nstakyac`*.

<sup>178</sup> There is one sub-section dedicated to the contents of these romances later in the section of bardic performance.

<sup>179</sup> He also reported that *a  uġ* Feyradi (Fahrad), a young contemporary of him, was circuiting in towns and villages, yet not telling these common stories, but plots from Abovean, Raffi, P  ro  ean, Cerenc`'s novels. His songs are adapted from short stories' plots as well. Here the influence of nationalism is apparent. See: Levonyan, 1963, p. 110.

<sup>180</sup> Gri  a  vili, 1989, pp. 62-64.



to the latter, the aşik narrative (naql in Georgian) relates to “good and bad people’s adventures and deeds”. But if bards performed during religious festivals in the courtyard of churches, squares, or simply on a piece of flat ground, they would treat only religious themes from the Bible, perhaps in dialogue form, adapted into verse, with accompanying music. At other times the performance would be secular. Those might take place in the market, with bands and soloists, while the two aşiks would perform witty and comical dialogues in verse with moralistic teachings to saz accompaniment. Due to its secular nature and popularity, such performance was condemned by the clergy and disappeared in the 1880s in Tiflis.

The last two types of bards had already disappeared by Levonyan’s time. The first of these was a comedian telling jokes (*latifaçı*<sup>181</sup> in Turkey, *khamuri* in Georgia, and *bambarak* in Armenia). Practitioners wore a red gown and hat, and made a sudden appearance at a home or public feast and wedding, performing various mocking movements and telling jokes and humorous quatrains devoted to the “heroes of the day”. The final type was a juggler, who was able to play more than two instruments or perform other tricks simultaneously. Two examples of this type are Sari-Öllan, the Armenian aşuġ of the great Janissary Abe Aġa in Constantinople in the first half of the nineteenth century and the Armenian aşuġ Miskin Burġi (d. 1847) from Ganja.<sup>182</sup>

## 2. Court bards

These played here not only in the courts of heads of state like the Ottoman Sultan,

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<sup>181</sup> According to Levonyan’s Armenian transcription; in Turkish it should be *latifeci*.

<sup>182</sup> Levonyan, 1944, pp. 28-30.

Iranian Shah, or Georgian king, but also the palaces or residences of various lower officials such as khans, pashas, and other local rulers. We have already noted aşık Qurbani's invitation to Shah Ismail I's court for a period. Sayat'-Nova's identity as Georgian King Erekle II's court poet is well known. Meanwhile, during the reigns of sultans Mahmud II, Abdülmecid, and Abdülaziz there were places for 20-30 aşiks at the Ottoman court, who would play in the sultan's presence<sup>183</sup>.

Although praise for the masters in whose employ they found themselves, or other topics pertaining to the ruling class, might be regarded as important themes in their works, their status was that of musician and entertainer rather than court poet and hence there are few songs of this kind in their output, e.g. Qurbani's single song in straight praise of Shah Ismail I and Sayat'-Nova's *Dun ēn glxēn imastun is* "Thou art profoundly wise"<sup>184</sup>, a petition to King Erekle II of Kartli. Similarly, there is hardly any evidence that any of them might have been involved in politics.

### 3. Muslim religious places and Sufi bards

Sufi bards belonged to one or other Sufi order and might wander from city to city, residing in local *tekkes* and performing there, though their performance was not restricted to the tekkes alone. The content of their works might vary over a wide spectrum, but always on a Sufi theme such as the transitoriness of this world, love of God, and ultimate unity with God, etc. If the order was involved in politics, they might immediately become political propagandists as well, as is exemplified by Pir Sultan

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<sup>183</sup> Artun, 2011, p. 41.

<sup>184</sup> Here I follow Dowsett's translation: Dowsett, 1997, Index, p. 468.

Abdal. This type of bard also included Armenian aşuFs who converted to Islam, though biographical information about them is very meager.

#### 4. Army/Navy aşiks

This category is restricted to Ottoman Muslim aşiks as Christians were excluded from military service in both the Ottoman Empire and Iran for most of the time under discussion. Moreover, no information is extant on purely professional lay soldiers simultaneously performing as an aşiq in Azerbaijan or Southern Caucasia. Since the army aşiks were connected with the Janissaries, they would have had a strong connection with the Bektaşî order, too. Predictably, the military is an essential theme in their works.<sup>185</sup> Sometimes such aşiks would have been commissioned to promote the soldiers/sailors' morale as the *mehter* band, judging from their songs. Artun mentions that after 1826 the tasks traditionally performed by the Janissary aşiks' were assumed by aşiks who wanted to take on military service, yet there seem to be no data on major military aşiks from the nineteenth century in the lists compiled by Köprülü and Artun.

#### 5. Countryside bards

Artun identifies two types of village aşık, nomadic, and settled.<sup>186</sup> However, Levonyan contends that even these settled bards do not necessarily perform in villages exclusively. During winter when villagers were free from regular labor, the bards would perform for them in courtyards or family gatherings while in other seasons when the peasants were busy they would go to nearby towns or cities to perform in the street, in

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<sup>185</sup> Artun, 2011, pp. 53-54.

<sup>186</sup> Artun, 2011, p. 48.

squares or churches, or in family yards. Indeed, Levonyan provides detailed description of their solo performance in the open air. Most of these bards were blind and illiterate. When they found an open air occasion where many people were present, they would sit down on the ground with their legs crossed and begin to perform. If any passer-by was moved by their songs, they would leave a token of their appreciation in the handkerchief in front of the bard. If those bards appeared in groups without any musical instrument, they were called *mtrup*.<sup>187</sup> It seems that this type of village bard is alluded to in the preface to the novel *Wounds of Armenia* by Xaç`atur Abovean. According to Artun, settled village bards composed in the folk idiom and treated the topics of love, nature, and village life in a simple, sometimes coarse, style closer to anonymous folklore.<sup>188</sup>

#### 6. Nomadic bards

Accounts of this type of bard are extremely scarce. Most records relate to Ottoman Turkmen nomadic *aşıks* whose existence continued into the nineteenth century, most of whom came from Southern, Southeastern, or Eastern Anatolia, where Turkmen and other nomadic people lived. Descriptions of nature and nomadic life and a folkloristic style are two significant features of their works.<sup>189</sup> Additionally, Qasımlı mentions Qaşqay *aşıqs* in central Southern Iran in tribes that retain a nomadic life until today, so that possibly these Qaşqay *aşıqs* may still be nomadic now as well.<sup>190</sup>

#### F. Regional bardic centers

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<sup>187</sup> Levonyan, 1944, p. 32.

<sup>188</sup> Artun, 2011, pp. 48-50.

<sup>189</sup> Artun, 2011, pp. 50-51.

<sup>190</sup> Qasımlı, 2003, p. 264.

Scholarly literature up to this point has employed varied terminology by which to refer collectively to a series of bards associated with a particular location over a prolonged period of time (Turkish *kol* “branch”, Armenian *dproc`* “school”, Azeri *məktəb* “school” or *mühit* “milieu”).<sup>191</sup> They all manifest systemic problems in suggesting a greater degree of lineal progression or continuity than can be supported by the historical record, particularly for the Early Modern era. Here the more general term “center” will be used both for uniformity as well as to avoid the sort of misinterpretation associated with the others.

Turkish monographs provide the most detailed definition of the terminology used. According to Doğan Kaya, an aşık branch is “a school within the apprenticeship tradition, (made up) by gradually increasing aşiks, obedient to the nuclear master, continuing his style, language, rhyme, tune, theme, memories and romances.” Emphasis on the pivotal figure, the core master, who founded the branch as the basis for defining the subsequent grouping of bards affords greater comprehensiveness than the principle of geographical distribution found in Armenian and Azeri monographs. At the same time, it is more feasible to construct such a grouping in the Turkish case since scholars mainly trace the lineage of the Anatolian aşık branches from the nineteenth century, for which there is much more documentation available, rather than in the Azerbaijani case, where the attempt is made to extend the groups back into the eighteenth or even seventeenth century. Inevitably, this means that Azerbaijani lineages are often significantly vaguer, with only one representative per century, which renders results

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<sup>191</sup> As quoted from Artun, 2011, p. 71, Levonyan, 1944, pp. 34-45, and Qasımlı, 2003, pp. 177-178.

significantly less reliable.<sup>192</sup> However, according to the Turkish scholars' definition mentioned above, it is not enough to construct a "branch" only by a geographical region and inaugurating aşık(s). The aşiks identified with the same branch should reflect similarities in the style of their literary and musical compositions as well. Artun lists the major branches of Turkish aşiks by the core master who inaugurated it, with the geographical distribution added in brackets, tracing these from the late nineteenth century and up to the present,<sup>193</sup> as the Emrah Branch (Tokat-Kastamonu), Dertli Branch (Bolu-Kastamonu-Çankırı), Ruhsati Branch (Sivas), Sümmani Branch (Erzurum), Derviş Muhammed Branch (Malatya), Huzuri Branch (Artvin), and Şenlik Branch (East Anatolia-Azerbaijan).

As noted in other contexts, Armenians display a greater readiness than their regional counterparts to adopt European cultural approaches and terminology. This is evidenced by Levonyan's use of the term "school" to define two sets of regional groupings of Armenian aşuks on the paradigm of modern literary schools. In the latter context the term implies a tight coterie of writers congregated around the same conception of the nature of literature and its aims, methodology, and approach to literary creation, who then put these principles into practice in their writing. In the Armenian milieu that terminology is perfectly appropriate to literary groups like the *Vernatun* in 1890s Tiflis and *Mehean* in 1900s Constantinople, however although Levonyan combines artistic and stylistic features with his geographical groupings, those are still

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<sup>192</sup> Qasımlı, 2003, pp. 177-280.

<sup>193</sup> Artun, 2001, pp. 65-66.

too diffuse to warrant the application of the term “school”. Moreover, Levonyan unfortunately does not record any Armenian *aşuġ* lineages in his monographs.

The first set of *aşuġ* clusters Levonyan identifies consists of three “major schools” in Iran, the Ottoman Empire, and Tiflis, all bearing the influence of Turkish *aşiks*.<sup>194</sup> The first is the Persian-Armenian school centered in Isfahan that lasted from the late seventeenth century to the 1780s, composed in Azeri, Persian, and the New-Julfan dialect of Armenian, and employed most commonly the genres of *dyubeyit`*, *foşma*, *muxammaz* and *dastan*. Second is the Turkish-Armenian school, centered in Constantinople that extended from the 1730s till the 1870s, and composed exclusively in Turkish, utilizing more diversified forms with more abstruse content, and a loftier style characterized by more Arabic and Persian words in their compositions, since this group was under the comprehensive influence of Ottoman classical literature. The third group comprises the Georgian-Armenian school, established in Tiflis from the 1750s to the end of the nineteenth century, with Sayat`-Nova as the undisputed central figure, composing in the Tiflis dialect of Armenian, and featuring a large number of Persian and Azeri words.<sup>195</sup>

Although Levonyan designates the first grouping as centered on Constantinople, in fact several of the traceable Armenian *aşuġs* of the Ottoman Empire are scattered over a vast geographic stretch rather than clustered in the capital and functioned over a period of more than 300 years. Later published sources also allow us to nuance

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<sup>194</sup> Levonyan, 1944, p. 41.

<sup>195</sup> Levonyan, 1944, pp. 34-39.

Levonyan's findings with regard to the language they employed, as some Armenian *aşuġs* from the Ottoman sphere also composed songs in Armenian.<sup>196</sup>

The second set comprises “minor schools” (*manr dproc`*) of Armenian *aşuġs* of more limited regional significance traced from early nineteenth century like the branches developed for Turkish *aşık*s. These include the Erzurum school (with the leading *aşuġ* Nitayi<sup>197</sup>), Kars school (T`uġġar<sup>198</sup>), Alek'sandrapol school (Bave<sup>199</sup>), Yerevan school (Shirin), Ganja school (Miskin Burġi<sup>200</sup>), Shamakh<sup>201</sup> school (Zargear<sup>202</sup> and Turinġ<sup>203</sup>), the Mountainous-Karabakh-Zangezur *aşuġ* congregation (centered in Xnjoresk, a village east of Goris, now in the Armenian province of Siwnik'), and the “national school” from the second half of nineteenth century, with Ĵivani as the central figure.

Here, too, the general arguments outlined above regarding the use of terminology apply. Additionally, one should note that Levonyan admits that many of Armenian *aşuġs* from these “small schools” composed in Turkish or Azeri. Only a minority of them has works in Armenian.

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<sup>196</sup> In Sahakyan's collection there is no indication that any of the Ottoman Armenian *aşuġs*' works included there is the translation of a work originally written in Turkish. Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 419-422.

<sup>197</sup> Born as Xaç`atur in the village of Hinj, Erzurum in the 1810s, he composed in Turkish, and died in 1856. See Levonyan, 1944, pp. 30-33 and Amirean, 1989, p. 159.

<sup>198</sup> Xaç`ik Amirean spells his professional name as T`iwččari, or as in Turkish, Tüccari. Born as Yovhannēs in the village of Łan/Kan in the Kars district in the 1760s, he lost his eyesight due to illness in childhood. He studied the *aşuġ* tradition with the famous Armenian *aşuġ* Dearkeahi (or as in Turkish, Dergâhi) and composed in Turkish. He was famous for his genius in improvisation in storytelling. See Levonyan, 1944, pp. 21-22, 26, 1963, pp. 108-109, and Amirean, 1989, pp. 126-127.

<sup>199</sup> Biographical information is currently unavailable.

<sup>200</sup> His real name is lost. He was born in Ganja in the 1810s, and also called Miskin-Allahverdi. No further details are available. See Levonyan, 1892, p. 30.

<sup>201</sup> Now Şamaxı in central Northern Azerbaijan.

<sup>202</sup> His birth name was Abraham. See Levonyan, 1892, p. 71-72.

<sup>203</sup> Born as T`oros in the village of K`ark`anj in the district of Shamakh in the 1790s, he left his home region for Astrakhan in his youth, settled down there, and died at the age of 85. See Levonyan, 1892, pp. 23-24.



## G. Bardic performance

### 1. The language of bardic performance

From its inception in the sixteenth century the general norm is for bardic composition to be written in Oghuz Turkic dialects.<sup>204</sup> No extant works by Turkic bards is found in any other idiom. However, various other ethnic groups, especially Armenians, have employed other languages at different times. Several songs composed in Armenian date back to the seventeenth century.<sup>205</sup> Meanwhile, both Armenian and Georgian bards composed in Georgian, while smaller numbers of songs, so far composed only by Armenians, exist in Persian and Kurdish. Thus, Yart'un Ōhli has 3 songs in Persian,<sup>206</sup> while a number of İlahis<sup>207</sup> in Kurdish are recorded in the Armenian script, either written or inscribed by Ottoman Armenians.<sup>208</sup> At the same time, Gēorg Axverdean notes that in the early nineteenth century certain pious Armenian aşuİs considered it blasphemous to sing in Armenian unless the work related to God or the saints, since the Armenian language was viewed as holy.<sup>209</sup>

### 2. Collections of bardic songs: davt`ar/defter/dəftər

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<sup>204</sup> In the preface to his novel *Wounds of Armenia* (Verk` Hayastani), Abovean describes how deeply the Armenian village audience was attracted by aşuİ performance, even though most of them could not understand it, since it was performed in Turkish. See *X.Abovyan: Erkeri liakatar žolovacı*, vol. 3, HSSR GA Hratarakč`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1948, p. 4.

<sup>205</sup> Axverdean, 1852, preface, p. III.

<sup>206</sup> Aram Eremean, *Aşuİ Yart'un Ōhli*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.: Karō Aşuİean, Tehran, 1946, p. 31. He only mentioned the existence of these songs.

<sup>207</sup> A rarer genre of bardic song with religious contents, hence the name İlahi “of God”, as will be discussed in section 6 of Chapter 3.

<sup>208</sup> They are taken from a collection of Kurmanji Kurdish songs published in the South-Eastern inland Ottoman city of Harput (Xarberd in Armenian) in 1880. See Mehmet Bayrak: *Alevi-Bektaşî edebiyatında Ermeni aşıkırları (aşuğlar)*, Öz-Ge Yayınları, Ankara, 2005, pp. 702-705, with 8 songs included and the source cited, but unfortunately lacking a study of the phenomenon.

<sup>209</sup> Axverdean, 1852, preface, p. III.

As noted already, bardic performance consists of prose narrative and rhymed songs. Traditionally disciples learn the former from their masters by heart from mouth to ear,<sup>210</sup> while the latter are written down in a notebook (davt`ar/defter/dəftər)<sup>211</sup>. Consequently, the prose forms continually vary and develop in the course of circulation, but the songs enjoy greater stability even over centuries. The bards would inscribe the songs in their notebooks themselves, if they had eyesight and literacy. In cases they were incapable of do this themselves, it was done by their relatives, disciples, or intimates.<sup>212</sup> So far bardic notebooks in the Arabic, Armenian, and Georgian scripts have been discovered.<sup>213</sup> It has been stated that songs in some of these notebooks were organized according to the principle of elevated divans, i.e., according to the order of the last rhyme-bearing letters in the Arabic alphabet, but I have not seen any convincing example<sup>214</sup>. It is also uncertain whether any of the songs included in a notebook might be intended for performance in one of the prose narrative(s) referred to.

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<sup>210</sup> There have been written record of the Hikaye narrative for a long time, too. But there are two major problems regarding them. Firstly, the written form cannot represent many elements of oral performance, e.g. formulae and most of the individualized remarks of the teller. Secondly, once the hikaye prose takes on written form, the number of songs included in performance decreases. See Başgöz, 2008, pp. 156-157.

<sup>211</sup> Another Turkish word *cönk* is used side by side with it among Turks. So far I have seen no reference suggesting any nuance in meaning between these two names.

<sup>212</sup> Levonyan, 1963, p. 124.

<sup>213</sup> It should be noted that the alphabets are not one to one corresponding to the languages in which bardic songs were composed. The Arabic alphabet was used for Ottoman Turkish and Azeri dialects. The Armenian alphabet has been used for both Armenian and Turkish (Armeno-Turkish; but easily perceivable, most Armenian *aşuIs*' spelling is defective). As for the Georgian alphabet, Sayat`-Nova used it for both Armenian and Azeri.

<sup>214</sup> Henrik Baxč`inyan, *Sayat`-Nova: xafer: liakatar žofovacu*, Grakanut`yan ev Arvesti T`angarani Hratarakč`ut`yun, Yerevan, 2003, p. 287. Here Baxč`inyan is quoting from Morus Hasrat`yan, "Sayat-Novayi davt`arē", *Telekagir*, 1963 (10), p. 9. However, judging from the order in both collections with Baxč`inyan as the main editor, which largely follow the original order in the Davt`ar, I cannot take this conclusion for granted. The final letters of each Azeri song do not even appear largely to correspond to their place in the Arabic alphabet, but seem quite random, not to mention the fact that in a divan, poems of the same genre should be classed together, a practice, which Sayat`-Nova did not follow faithfully. For the organization of the Davt`ar, see Morus Hasrat`yan, op. cit. and Baxč`inyan, 2003, pp. 285-300.

### 3. Standard musical instruments in bardic performance

The single most essential instrument for most bards is the saz, a long-necked lute-like stringed instrument.<sup>215</sup> At least for Turkish/Azerbaijani aşık/aşıq, performance on the saz is a requisite skill to be learned from the master. An interesting anecdote is transmitted in the name of the famous nineteenth-century Azerbaijani aşık Ələsgər to the effect that he forbade his disciples to marry until they had mastered the skill of performing tunes on the saz<sup>216</sup>.

The saz, in all its varieties,<sup>217</sup> is the most important musical instrument for solo performance. When performing together, other instruments are added to form a small ensemble. In such cases the kamancha (or as Levonyan calls it, čianur), çoğur/č`ongur, tar, kamani, santur, dap (tambourine), naqara, duduk/balaban or other instruments can be found.<sup>218</sup> Levonyan affords a detailed list of the stringed instruments used by aşufl, including:

Harp-shaped: k`nar, tavił;

Dulcimer-shaped: k`anon, sant`ur;

Bowed string instruments: kamancha (čianur), k`emani (kamani);

Guitar or lute-shaped: saz, t`ar, č`nkyur (çoğur/č`ongur).

While the duduk/balaban, a double-reed woodwind instrument, and the naqara

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<sup>215</sup> Turkic scholars may claim that saz is the substitute for the qobuz, just as aşık/aşıq is the avatar of ozan or bahşı; which is as difficult to verify as the latter claim due to the lack of record. See: Qasımlı, 2003, pp. 117-127.

<sup>216</sup> Həkimov, 2006, p.510.

<sup>217</sup> Həkimov, 2006, pp. 496-509.

<sup>218</sup> Levonyan, 1944, pp. 20, 31-32. For a more detailed list, see Levonyan, 1966, pp. 203-228, with images on p. 216. However, since his definition of aşuf is too broad, he even included several instruments portrayed in medieval sources only. The one listed above comprises those still circulating from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries.

drum are reported as in Azerbaijani aşiq performance.<sup>219</sup>

However, in most cases the instrumentalists (*sazandars*) are not vocalists like the bard. For example, according to Levonyan, only the dap player might sing while performing.<sup>220</sup>

#### 4. Forms and procedures of bardic performance

From attested records at least four different forms of formal bardic performance are documented before WWI, the quasi-official performance in nineteenth-century Constantinople, which disappeared when official support dried up, quasi-religious performance, which continued into early twentieth century at least, Hikaye performance, and formal contest, both of which have continued into the post-WWII era. The locations for these performances had to be prepared well in advance. During the performance certain procedures and ceremonies are observed.

The procedures associated with the quasi-official and quasi-religious performances resemble each other somewhat, but have long since lost their importance, while differing significantly from Hikaye performance and contests.<sup>221</sup> As a result, I will only offer a detailed treatment of Hikaye performance in coffee houses and contests.<sup>222</sup>

##### A. Procedures of Hikaye performance in coffee houses in 1950s Kars, as recorded by Başgöz<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Oldfield Senarslan, 2007, p. 1.

<sup>220</sup> Levonyan, 1944, p. 32.

<sup>221</sup> Due to this reason I decide not to give the full procedures here to save space. For references, see: Günay, 1999, pp. 35-38.

<sup>222</sup> For Günay's reference to these two forms, see Günay, 1999, pp. 39-77.

<sup>223</sup> As concluded from Başgöz, 2008, pp.27-29, 157-170.

The Hikaye performance begins after the evening prayer. The audience begins to gather well before the performance, and everyone is served tea, providing the teahouse with an income. At the set time, the aşık appears with his saz. After tuning the instrument, he greets the audience, according to the opening formula of the performance called *giriş kapı* (“entrance door”). By this time members of the audience have also greeted each other and taken their seats. Nevertheless, the aşık does not begin the storytelling right away, but opens the performance with a *döşeme* (literally, “floor”), which includes a number of introductory songs in certain prosodies, improvised or prepared. Only after the *döşeme* does the storytelling proper begin in prose narrative with songs intercalated and interspersed with formulae and improvisation, and enhanced by physical gestures such as circling around the audience’s seats to maintain rapport. The tale might last for several nights. At its conclusion the aşık passes to the closing formula, or the “exit door” (*çıkış kapı*)<sup>224</sup> to close the performance.

B. Procedures of bardic contest, as drawn from Umay Günay’s and Erman Artun’s accounts<sup>225</sup>

There are several terms for the bardic contest in Turkish, *karşılaşma* (match), *deyişme* (lit. “saying”), *atışma* (battle of words) or *karşıberi* (confrontation). In the

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<sup>224</sup> Başgöz, 2008, p.167.

<sup>225</sup> There is some suggestion that the bardic contest is of Central Asian origin and spread to the Caucasus only in the nineteenth century. So far I have not found any published material to support it. The only noteworthy point is that the contest, or according to the author’s term, “vocal dueling”, is prevalent in only three regions in Turkey from East to West: Kars, Erzurum, and Konya. The first two are the major cities for this activity, both in northeastern Turkey, maintaining a cultural connection with Azerbaijan, while the continuation of the tradition in Konya is mainly due to the annual Aşık Festival there. The author cites material corroborating the existence of a contest tradition in other Turkic-speaking area from Central Asia to Azerbaijan. See Yıldırım Erdener, *The song contests of Turkish minstrels*, Garland Publishing, Inc., New York, NY, 1995, pp. 30-33.

contest, there can be more than two bards participating in front of the audience. The formal bardic contest comprises four phases:<sup>226</sup>

- a. Hoşlama (merhabalaşlama): greetings. At the beginning all the participating bards greet the audience with quatrains with refrains containing words of welcome like “hoş geldiniz”, “safa geldiniz” etc.. If there is any celebrity in attendance, their names should be mentioned in particular.
- b. Hatırlama (canlandırma) “preparation (activation)”: the participant bards are expected to perform songs composed by famous or popular bards preceding them.
- c. Tekellüm “speaking, talking”: this is the main part of the contest, which generates most excitement. The participating bards compete in improvising songs on certain topics with certain rhyme schemes, both to be decided by the audience or the occasion of the performance. The competing bards are expected to belittle, humiliate, or even denigrate each other in the improvisations, for which the *koşma* is the most frequent prosody. If no one wins the competition, then all the bards should praise each other to mark the conclusion of this section in the proceedings.
- d. Uğurlama (methiye, güle güle) “praise”, “eulogy” or “farewell”: this is the closing part of the contest. The most common prosody here is still the *koşma*. Participating bards are expected to apologize for their previous acrimonious improvisations and now to praise each other, letting the victor bring the contest to the end.

C. Procedures for an *aşuİ* contest as summarized from Garegin Levonyan’s

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<sup>226</sup> Naturally, there is regional variation in the details.

accounts<sup>227</sup>

Levonyan has reported a variant of the aşuî contest that, though composed of less formal phases than the preceeding account, is no less dramatic. Additionally, Levonyan provides more details on the aftermath of such a contest.

In this case the contest takes place in an open-air place like a square, or a spacious coffee house. The participants are an established local master aşuî and a newly established aşuî or a freshman, who wants to display his art, skill,<sup>228</sup> and talent. Local and near-by aşuîs attend as well, not only out of interest, but also as assistants and judges. The rivals sit down face to face, with saz in hand, and the contest starts with the already famous master aşuî.

The master aşuî opens with a song mocking the freshman's audacity at even daring to challenge him. The freshman must answer with a song of exactly the same measure and rhyme. After this prelude, the newcomer plays a piece of difficult melody as a solo, in order to showcase his musical capability. Then the contest starts in earnest.

The master aşuî sings a *lap`ullama*<sup>229</sup> in a heavy tone, containing many questions for the challenger to answer. The challenger responds to each question with a song in the same measure and rhyme to display all his capability and talent. This is the most difficult facet of the aşuî art, since it is purely improvisational. If successful, the newcomer is qualified as a master aşuî, while If he fails, his saz is taken away and he has to leave to the words "Go! You are unworthy of being called an aşuî." If his

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<sup>227</sup> Levonyan, 1963, pp. 188-190.

<sup>228</sup> Here Levonyan used two Persian-Turkish words, *hunar* and *ma`rifat*.

<sup>229</sup> The term's etymology is unclear. It refers to songs containing a question in each one or two line(s), and corresponding answer. See Levonyan, 1963, pp. 184-185.

performance merits acceptance as a master *aşuġ*, but the participant also wants to beat<sup>230</sup> the already established master, the newly appointed master *aşuġ* has to challenge the latter as the latter had challenged him, i.e., to compose a song to question the established master, but in a more difficult genre of song with a more complicated rhyme. If the latter fails to correspond, he has to descend to the mass audience in shame since “a wandering boy” has “beaten” him. If he does not wish to break the custom, he should hand his *saz* directly to the challenger and kiss the latter’s hand, thereby admitting that the challenger is more accomplished than himself. But the norm on such rare occasions is for the winner to magnanimously return the *saz* to the previous master, kissing his hand and begging his “fatherly blessing.”<sup>231</sup> Even if the established master was trounced, he would not lose his fame among the people, since he beaten earlier master *aşuġ*s in his youth in order to ascend to the level of master, too. Only the winner’s *saz* would be hung higher than the previous master’s in the coffee house.<sup>232</sup> Among Armenians, examples of famous contests include K’eşiş-Öġli’s victory over T’uġġar in Kars and Ĵivani’s victory over Zahri and Havesi in Alek’sandrapol.

## 5. Strategies in the bardic contest

Yıldıray Erdener has produced a more detailed synthesis of the major themes of songs in bardic contests and summarized a few “strategies” applied to defeat antagonist(s), which encompass not only what is sung but also the manner of behavior

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<sup>230</sup> Here the Armenian verb is *kapel*, “to tie, to bind, to link”.

<sup>231</sup> This is what Levonyan describes. In Turkish cases, kissing on the cheek is found. See Erdener, 1995, p. 118.

<sup>232</sup> “In coffee houses, the *aşuġ*’s *sazes* are hung according to seniority. To hang a *saz* above the senior’s would be offensive to him. If an outside *aşuġ* comes, his *saz* must be hung at the lowest level until he wins a contest”. See Levonyan, 1963, p. 190.



during the contest.<sup>233</sup> Below I divide the material by category and add some of interpretations of my own. Naturally, the different strategies are not always mutually exclusive, but may be to employed together by a contestant.

A. Strategies on the content of songs

- a. Question and Riddle: the bard improvises questions and/or riddles as difficult as possible in order to defeat his antagonist(s) when the latter fails to respond.

In Northeastern Turkey, the questions and riddles used to be generally religion-oriented, including folk beliefs, while in the Republican period, their contents were largely secularized. They are now improvised “in a witty and humorous way” to “interest and entertain”<sup>234</sup> the audience.

- b. Insulting: the bards use “their traditional knowledge, wit, skill and talent” to “insult each other in funny and witty ways in order to hurt the feelings and lower the self-esteem of the opponent.”<sup>235</sup> There are three basic types of insult:

1. The opponent’s physical appearance: his torso, neck, arms, height, face, hair or manner of walking and talking.
2. The opponent’s intellectual life, talent, habits and beliefs.
3. The opponent’s family members: his father, grandfather, grandmother, and especially his mother-in-law.

Insulting “is the most entertaining part for the audience.”<sup>236</sup> But ‘to use this strategy effectively, an ashik must know what his audience considers to be

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<sup>233</sup> Erdener, 1995, Chapter 5, “Strategies to gain fame, prestige, and recognition”, pp. 111-151.

<sup>234</sup> Erdener, 1995, p. 120.

<sup>235</sup> Erdener, 1995, p. 122.

<sup>236</sup> Erdener, 1995, p. 128.

humorous. He must also understand the area's social and cultural rules and know what he can or cannot insult. For example, it would be improper to make sexual allusions about the adversary's immediate female relatives, wife or daughter, but it would not be improper to attack his opponent's grandmother, mother-in-law or, in rarer cases, his sister;<sup>237</sup> while the opponent's father or mother could become the target only if they are not alive.<sup>238</sup> Likewise, insults on physical features are exaggerated, "unusually absurd and untrue. If, however, there is a genuine sore spot, it will never be touched or discussed."<sup>239</sup>

- c. Puns: Erdener mentions two examples, in which the verbs have both non-sexual and sexual connotations.<sup>240</sup> It is reasonable to assume that other sorts of puns might be used as well, e.g. homonymy, as explained at the beginning of Chapter 3.

#### B. Strategies based on the form of songs

- a. Avoiding certain letters: the most common case is avoiding labial letters (b, p, f, v, m), known as *dodağdeğmez* "lips don't touch"<sup>241</sup> in Turkish. This strategy is a particularly difficult challenge to follow as "only a few ashiks have mastered this skill."<sup>242</sup>
- b. Laying a trap for the opponent by using words difficult to rhyme:
  - 1. Such terms may rhyme with only a few words. This is called a *Kapanık ayak*

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<sup>237</sup> Erdener, 1995, p. 122.

<sup>238</sup> Erdener, 1995, p. 137.

<sup>239</sup> Erdener, 1995, p. 127.

<sup>240</sup> Erdener, 1995, pp. 145-146.

<sup>241</sup> Erdener, 1995, p. 141.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid..

(locked rhyme) or *Dar ayak* (tight rhyme) in Northeastern Turkey<sup>243</sup>.

2. Words that rhyme mainly with obscene or vulgar terms.

### C. Strategies outside the content of the songs

Those involve other aspects of the bardic performance.<sup>244</sup> One of them is to employ melodies unfamiliar to the opponent(s), which will make it more difficult for him/them to respond. Many strategies concern performance approach. For example, a humble attitude in the overture creates a good impression of the bard with the audience. If a bard “replies so quickly that he does not need to play his saz before coming up with an answer, it suggests that he is a competent and intelligent artist, able to find quick and witty responses.”<sup>245</sup> It is allowed to play the opponent’s melody when he is performing. But some bards might intentionally play it loudly to interrupt the opponent. Or, behaving as if not paying attention to the opponent(s)’ performance might imply that the bard does not care about his opponent(s), since he can beat the latter easily without listening closely to the latter’s composition.

Bardic competitions are expected to be fierce to entertain the audience. However, there is a danger of matters descending to physical attacks in some cases.<sup>246</sup> To keep the competition at an entertaining and peaceable level it is first preferable that the performers are not of about the same age since insulting the opponent(s)’ family members can only be mutual in this case. Otherwise the younger bard may be regarded as incompetent for engaging in it or as undermining the social value of showing respect

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<sup>243</sup> Erdener, 1995, p. 146.

<sup>244</sup> Erdener, 1995, pp. 144-145.

<sup>245</sup> Erdener, 1995, p. 144.

<sup>246</sup> Erdener, 1995, p. 141.

to the elder. Secondly, the competitors should not be equally competent, otherwise the contest would become one-sided. Thirdly, they should not know each other well or the insults might degenerate into something really offensive and dangerous. In other cases, the bards would usually refuse to compete with each other. However, if such a competition takes place, the less competent and/or younger figure “will acknowledge his opponent’s superiority and will not reply to his insults.”<sup>247</sup>

## 6. Riddle

While forming part of a formal bardic performance,<sup>248</sup> the riddle may also be found separately in a particular kind of contest. The latter usually takes place in the coffee house also, but is not as fierce as the sort of contest described above, and sometimes involves a gift for the winner who is first to give the correct answer.

Both Artun and Levonyan have descriptions of such riddle contests, the latter’s account being more detailed and dramatized.<sup>249</sup> According to Artun, there can be performances of other genres of aşık songs before and after the riddle is raised or solved respectively, while according to Levonyan’s Armenian cases, the riddle is developed directly by a master aşık, written on a piece of silk and hung in the coffee house to which other bards and dignitaries are invited. After the band plays an opening melody, the contest begins. The riddle is an elaborately fabricated piece of song, which, according to Artun, is not required to be in a specific prosody, and can be only one stanza long. Levonyan’s account indicates it is usually a 3-4 stanza *loşma* or *gazel*, and

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<sup>247</sup> Erdener, 1995, pp. 138-139.

<sup>248</sup> Artun, 2011, p. 95. For details, see Günay, 1999, pp. 35-36.

<sup>249</sup> Artun, 2011, pp. 96-97 and Levonyan, 1963, pp. 190-195.

possibly involves further indications, e.g. the number of letters in the answer word. The invited bards are required to answer in songs, too. In the Turkish case, the answer to the riddle should be given to the owner of the coffee house by its composer, while in the Armenian case, the master *aşuġ* who composes the riddle would himself sit under the riddle and wait for answers from the invited *aşuġ*s.

#### H. Themes of the bardic narratives

As noted at the beginning, the *hikaye* narratives are basically folk romances. There are several sources for these romances:

A. Classical literature, like *Laylġ* and *Majnūn*, the love tragedy between two pre-Islamic Arab young people from enemy tribes, popular throughout the Near East.

B. Popular stories like *Ashik Kerib*, the romance between a wandering *aşık* and his love *Shah Senem*, both from *Tiflis*, the *aşık*'s miraculous return from *Aleppo* through *Saint Khidr*'s help, allowing him to keep his promise to marry his love. It was adapted by *Lermontov* as a short story, and later as a film by *Sergei Parajanov*.

C. Stories treating historical master *aşiks* like *Qurbani*, *Abbas Tufarġanlı*, etc., of which the major theme is always romantic and anecdotal, even legendary, rather than historical and biographical. Thus, a *hikaye* about *Qurbani* puts him in the time of *Shah Abbas*, the great-great-grandson of *Shah Ismail*, his true contemporary, and involves *Saint Khidr*, amulets, and witches in its plot. At the end of the romance, *Qurbani* overcomes all his difficulties and enemies, marries *Perizat*, daughter of the

Khan of Ganja, and is appointed khan by his father-in-law.<sup>250</sup>

D. A bard's personal creation, like the story *Namuslu kız* ("Virtuous virgin"), composed by Aşık Sabit Müdâmi for a female audience and recorded by Başgöz, which tells the story of a girl defending her chastity from her wicked step-brother, escaping from her deceived parents through her blood-brother's caring intervention, and her legendary revenge on her step-brother.<sup>251</sup>

Apart from romantic themes, heroic plots are also common, yet the latter frequently include romantic elements in the plots, as in the romance of Koroğlu, in which the hero Ruşen Ali, alias Koroğlu, "son of the blind man", is a Robin Hood-style rebel against the tyrannical overseers, first Bolu Bey, the local ruler, then the sultan's army. But, at the same time, he is an aşık, and the rebellion plot is intertwined with his love story with Nigâr.<sup>252</sup> The hikayes, as prose narratives, are not usually written down, and hence are always subject to improvisations and other modifications. A more detailed analysis of the structure of these narratives is not attempted here, since there have been collections and analyses of these romances.<sup>253</sup> But it is worth mentioning that in a Turkic milieu, these stories are for performance on ordinary days, while during Muharram, Safar, Ramadan, in short, the Muslim holy months according to the Hijri Calendar, the form and content of aşık/aşiq performance might change. It might be

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<sup>250</sup> For the plot outline, see Başgöz, 2008, pp. 256-257.

<sup>251</sup> Başgöz, 2008, pp. 210-213. For the story plot outline, see pp. 268-269.

<sup>252</sup> There is no plot outline of this romance in *Hikâye*. These lines, including the spelling of names, follow the 20 century Turkish writer Yaşar Kemal's adaption in *Üç Anadolu Efsanesi*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., Cem Yayınevi, İstanbul, 1971, pp. 5-115.

<sup>253</sup> For example, the monographs *Hikâye* and *Aşık sənətinin poetikası* both contain chapters on the hikaye.

banned during Ramazan,<sup>254</sup> or as Başgöz reports of Tabriz, Iran in the 1960s, local aşıqs were permitted only to narrate the *Hamzaname*, *Battalname* and *Shahnameh* during the holy months of Muharram and Safar. The first two are epics about Islamic heroes fighting against the infidels, while the *Shahnameh* is the Iranian national epic.<sup>255</sup>

## I. Audience participation in bardic performance

As observed by Başgöz,<sup>256</sup> the audience in a Hikaye performance plays a role much more active than its counterpart in other musical art forms such as an orchestral concert or opera. The conventions in nineteenth-century European performing spaces, which were imported into the Near East, are not applicable in coffee houses and other traditional settings for aşık performances. Audience numbers, identity, and attitude towards the performance might influence the range and scale of aşık improvisations. Sometimes, they can determine the selection of the Hikaye performance, from which story it is to be performed, its duration (depending on their emotional involvement, the aşık will decide whether to elongate or abbreviate the story), or even to change the plot or the ending in rarer cases. Başgöz reports that in the 1860s, the Kars aşık Tüccari,<sup>257</sup> together with other aşıks in the city, by revised all the tragic endings of hikaye romances to happy ones under the extraordinary pressure of a soldier in the audience, who

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<sup>254</sup> It is quite difficult to retrieve the exact source for it. However, Artun mentions that on Thursday nights in Ramazan and winters, some of the Constantinople semâî kahvehanes stayed open. (Artun, 2011, p. 42) Therefore it can be inferred that normally they would have been closed at that time.

<sup>255</sup> Başgöz, 2008, p. 27.

<sup>256</sup> This material is largely based on Başgöz, 2008, pp. 201-208.

<sup>257</sup> Based on dating, it seems unlikely this Tüccari can be identified with the Armenian aşuġ who was already a master in the 1820s, as mentioned before.

threatened to kill every aşık who told a romance ending in tragedy.

Traditionally, patrons at coffee houses, taverns, etc. were male, regardless of occupation. However, Başgöz reports that on special occasions the aşık might perform exclusively for women in Eastern Anatolia. The tradition endured up to the 1960s, but is no longer active.<sup>258</sup> In such cases the distance between the aşık and his female audience, especially girls, would be set strictly. The aşık would be more cautious about the content and manner of his performance, avoiding obscene words, which might be popular with some male audience as well gestures or expressions that might be considered improper, or even teasing. The female audience would be under their family's supervision. If anything happened that was construed as offensive by the men of their family, the aşık would be punished. There were also stories and songs specifically designed for a female audience, which would teach them traditional moral requirements for women, like piety, obedience to their husband, etc., as well.

#### J. Social Functions of the bards and their compositions/performance

Early scholarly literature on the bards tends to focus on their role in social education, mobilization, or disseminating propaganda through their literature and performance.<sup>259</sup> These were the main concerns before WWI in both scholarly and political circles, though viewed with different understanding and purposes, depending on their diverse standpoints. For example, the first enlightened Turkish intellectuals like

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<sup>258</sup> This section is largely based on Başgöz, 2008, pp. 208-213.

<sup>259</sup> For example, Levonyan, 1963, pp. 139-145.



Namık Kemal attempted to learn the syllabic prosodies and composing in them, since he considered it as the “pure” Turkish national poetical form in contrast to divan poetry, based on the ‘arūd prosody and steeped in Arabic and Persian influence<sup>260</sup>. Armenian aşıfs like Jivani, Jamali, etc., consciously worked as enlighteners for their people, with their songs as the vehicle for social education<sup>261</sup>. As mentioned above, the sultans of the Tanzimat era made use of aşiks as a vehicle for propaganda through the officially appointed *âşıklar reis*<sup>262</sup>. Similarly, the Soviet authorities promoted the bardic tradition as an important literary component of the state, which could be employed as popularists for government policy among the mass population. For example, at the opening of the first Congress of Aşıqs in Baku in 1928, Səməd ağa Ağamalıoğlu, then chairman of the Central Executive Committee, AzSSR, said, “The aşiq is a mirror of people”, while Ruhulla Axundov, chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars, stated in his speech:

They<sup>263</sup> come from remote villages to the Azerbaijani people ... We till now have spent a huge amount of money on the works of propaganda. These aşıqs are great propagandists themselves. They live for the people. They play the people’s melody and happiness on their own saz. Aşıqs are poets of the poorest part of the people. One of the tasks on our necks is to help the people’s aşıqs.<sup>264</sup>

However, the most up-to-date theoretical discussion of this aspect of the bardic

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<sup>260</sup> Köprülü, 1966, p. 225.

<sup>261</sup> Ş. Grigoryan, “Aşufakan poezia” and “Jivani”, in S. N. Sarinyan et al. ed., *Hay nor grakanut`yan patmut`yun*, vol. 4, 1972, pp. 697-702, 714-720.

<sup>262</sup> Köprülü, 1962-1965, p. 527.

<sup>263</sup> Namazov’s own note, aşıqs.

<sup>264</sup> The two’s speeches are all quoted from: Namazov, 1983, pp. 155-156.

genre was advanced by Başgöz.<sup>265</sup> Yet he did not aim at providing an exhaustive list of the bard's functions, but rather criticized the single-function theory of folklore, arguing that besides a socially and politically conservative integrating role, which is inclusive of all the functions he quoted previously, for example, entertainment, sanction, education, and escape, folklore can be used for disintegration as well, as concluded by William Bascom and illustrated by the Turkish protests of the 1960s.

#### K. Forms, prosodies, and genres of bardic rhythmic compositions

There are dozens of names for different forms of bardic rhythmic compositions. However, a large number of these titles are simply composite. Moreover, the numerous terms apply to different dimensions as well, based respectively on the prosody, content, and rhetorical methods of the composition. Therefore, it is better to list them under these three categories in turn.<sup>266</sup>

An important principle to bear in mind is that with regard to the names and exact forms of bardic rhythmic compositions there is no strictly one to one correspondence. The same title may apply to different forms, while, less frequently, a certain form may be listed under different terms. It has to be stated at the outset that bardic prosodies form an open category, to which new genres might be added randomly in theory.<sup>267</sup> The

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<sup>265</sup> Başgöz, 2008, pp. 193-200.

<sup>266</sup> This section is based primarily on Artun, 2011, pp. 121-152, Levonyan, 1944, pp. 46-79, and 1963, pp. 149-157, as well as *Azərbaycan aşık-ları və el şii-rləri*, vol. 1, pp. XIV-XVI. Unfortunately, no major Azerbaijani publications, even Həkimov's (Həkimov, 2006, pp. 374-464), has dealt with this issue well. What can be found in Azerbaijani books is merely a list and an explanation of various names of the genres, with the more basic terms marked by a plurality of varieties; while titles according to the prosody and content are simply juxtaposed without any differentiation or attempt to clarify the issue.

<sup>267</sup> Levonyan, 1944, p. 46.

concrete items below are only the major forms common in songs of all the three languages discussed in this study, or, at least, very popular in two of them, and most ideally, favored by Sayat`-Nova. Even less frequent prosodies, if often employed by Sayat`-Nova,<sup>268</sup> will receive a brief discussion, while in the case of the less frequent, reference should be made to published materials cited in the footnotes or the bibliography.

#### Preliminary: Rhyme schemes in bardic compositions

Although the number of lines in each stanza (*beyt`/beyt/ beyt*, borrowed from Arabic, meaning “house”, a term Armenian represents by the term *tun*) may vary, the most common number is undoubtedly four. Based on ready generalizations, the rhyme schemes of five or six line stanzas can be regarded as extension of the four-line structure. There are three established types of rhyme scheme for a four-line stanza<sup>269</sup>:

A abab, cccb, dddb, eeeb

B aaab, cccb, dddb, eeeb

C xbyb, cccb, dddb, eeeb

The rhyme scheme of five-line stanza (*muhammes*) is: aaaaa, aaaab, etc<sup>270</sup>. But Armenian muxammaz songs might be composed according to different patterns, eg. aaaaa, bbbba, cccaa.

Similarly, the rhyme scheme of the six-line stanza (*museddes*) is: aaaaaa,

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<sup>268</sup> It must be noted that Sayat`-Nova used a variety of common titles in his Armenian and Azeri works. But most of them, like *lap`ia*, *lazel*, *taslib*, etc., are not mentioned in modern Azerbaijani monographs.

<sup>269</sup> Artun, 2011, pp. 127-128

<sup>270</sup> Artun, 2011, p. 143

bbbbba, ccccca, etc<sup>271</sup>.

Besides rhyme, refrain is a device bards employed more and more in the course of time, a fact most readily shown from the works of sixteenth to eighteenth century Armenian *aşu*ls. Apart from refrains used regularly after a stanza or each line in a stanza, there is a special rhyme scheme for bardic songs with refrains, as concluded by Levonyan<sup>272</sup>. It is based on rhyme scheme B above, only adding the same refrain to the rhymed lines in the first stanza, i.e., lines 1, 2 and 4; and the last (i.e. fourth) lines of the following stanzas.

#### 1. Prosodies in syllabic meters

Syllabic meter is native to Turkic literatures<sup>273</sup> and was adapted by Armenian literature from Syriac in the Late Antique period. Therefore, all mainstream bardic prosodies are syllabic.

##### A. *İoşma/koşma/qoşma*

Composed of eleven-syllable four-line stanzas, this prosody is by far the most popular genre among bards, as readily reflected in the sheer number of songs that feature it in most bards' collections. It is the technical base for many titles identified by their contents or rhetorical methods to be discussed in the following subsections.

##### B. *dyubeyit`/semâi/gərayli*

The term *semâi/semayi/səmai* applies to more than one genre. The one

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<sup>271</sup> Levonyan, 1944, pp. 48-49.

<sup>272</sup> Levonyan, 1944, pp. 49-50.

<sup>273</sup> See Gerhard Doerfer, *Formen der ältern Türkischen Lyrik*, *Studia Uralo-Altaica* 37, Universitas Szegediensis de Attila József Nominata, Szeged, 1996.

discussed here is based on four-line stanzas consisting of eight-syllable lines. In other respects, it resembles the *foşma/koşma/qoşma*, which it closely follows in popularity, as witnessed by the numbers of songs composed in this prosody.

C. bayat`i/mâni/bayati

Made up of four-line stanzas with a short line of only seven syllables.

D. divani/divan/divani

It consists of four-line stanzas normally of fifteen syllables; but Artun mentions varieties with fourteen- or sixteen- syllable lines as well.

E. mustezed/müstezat/müstəzad

Its four-line stanza comprises long and short lines consecutively. According to Levonyan, the first and third lines are fourteen-syllable, while the second and fourth have six syllables. The first, third, and fourth lines in the first stanza bear the rhyme, which is subsequently found only in the third and fourth lines, while the first and second lines in the coming stanzas have their own rhymes. Yet according to Artun, the short lines rhyme with the proceeding long lines, and the rhyming lexemes should have the same meaning.

F. muxammaz/muhammes/müxəmməs

The Arabic term *mukhammas* means “fivesome”. In most cases songs with this title are made up of five-line stanzas with sixteen syllables per line. However, according to Levonyan, four, six, or even eight-line stanzas exist with fourteen, fifteen or even twenty-syllable lines.

## 2. Prosodies in ‘arūd quantitative meters

Since there is no variation between long and short vowels, it has always been difficult to adapt the Arabo-Persian ‘arūd quantitative meter fully into Turkic languages, though the principle of long and short syllables is still feasible<sup>274</sup>. The situation for Armenian is similar: although quantitative meters are feasible, they were never applied.<sup>275</sup>

As mentioned above, some bards adopted ‘arūd meters from divan literature roughly in the seventeenth century. However, since most bards did not receive a higher education, their application of ‘arūd meters features multiple mistakes in calculating syllable length<sup>276</sup>. Indeed, in Azeri monographs no distinction is made between prosodies in syllabic meters and in quantitative meters at all. In contrast, Levonyan uses the traditional ‘arūd methods to count “meters” in most prosodies despite what was stated above regarding Armenian prosody. The lack of any explanation of his methodology leaves his work impenetrable. In view of all the above, I omit a listing of ‘arūd prosodies here, only referencing monographs on the subject.

### 3. Genres according to content

#### A. dastan/destan/dastan

This title, deriving from Persian *dāstān* (“story”), applies to all narrative songs in the bardic tradition. They are mostly composed in 8- or 11- syllable lines like the *foşma/koşma/qoşma* or *dyubeyit`/semâi/gərayli* in prosody, but these

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<sup>274</sup> Finn Tiesen, *A manual of classical Persian prosody: with chapters on Urdu, Karakhanidic, and Ottoman prosody*, Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1982, p. 210 and Walter G. Andrews Jr., *An introduction to Ottoman poetry*, Studies in Middle Eastern Literatures, No. 7, Bibliotheca Islamica, Minneapolis and Chicago, 1976, pp. 15-33.

<sup>275</sup> Charles Dowsett, “A metrical experiment”, *Raft*, 3 (1989), pp. 37-56.

<sup>276</sup> Artun, 2011, p. 147.

narrative works tend to be much longer than their lyric counterparts.

#### B. Other titles related to content

Bards give different names to their songs on the basis of content.<sup>277</sup> Scholars have listed more than a dozen different names for each type of content. However, of all these titles, a few are common to at least two peoples.

##### 1. ogyutlama/öğütname/ustadlamə

Songs of admonishment are common to all bards<sup>278</sup>.

##### 2. gyuzallama/gözellemə/gözəlləmə

Praise of a beauty or belle is another very popular theme.

##### 3. zavsat`lama/yaşname/vücutnamə

This can be interpreted as “pseudo-biographical,” in which the composer describes his/her life, but at best, it is only partially factual, since it portrays the life from cradle to grave. Clearly, events after a certain age must be fictional, and the authenticity of what comes before cannot necessarily be vouched for either.

#### 4. Genres according to rhetorical figures

##### A. t`ejnis/tecnis/təcnis

Arabic *tajnīs* means the application of the rhetorical figure *jinās*, which is

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<sup>277</sup> Erman Artun further divides destans according to their melodies as: *destan proper*, *varsagı* and *semaı*, and gives titles according to the content under several genres: *koşma*, *destan*, etc. See Artun, 2011, pp. 136-139. Yet he does not explain how the melodies differ, but describes each subcategory according to the prosody, length and content instead. I have not seen any other scholar offering similar subcategorization. Since Armenian and Azerbaijani scholars do not attribute these names to a certain genre, I do not follow Artun in this procedure.

<sup>278</sup> I should clarify that the correspondence between Azeri *ustadlamə* and Turkish/Armenian *öğütname/ogyutlama* is based on my own judgment according to the description. I had assumed that a cognate title existed in Azeri, but I have yet to encounter it in available Azeriworks.

basically a sort of pun. In the first of two consecutive lines, a certain combination of syllables (not necessarily a single word) has one meaning. When it reappears in the next line, it bears another meaning and is spelled another way (homophone or different division of syllables, which results in different words).

B. muhamme/muamma/qıfilbənd

Riddle song.

C. mulamma

The Arabic term *mulamma`* refers to a macaronic song composed in more than one language. Each language in this type of composition should feature in at least a short sentence, not only single words.

D. aliflama/elifname/

Acrostic songs, in which all the letters of the alphabet for a particular language should be named in the correct alphabetical order in a manner “X (name of the letter) for/is Y (a word consisting that letter)”. In medieval and early modern Near East, there is frequently a disjunction between language and alphabet as early literacy was taught via the medium of the community’s sacred scripture, leading to a number of syntheses like “Judeo-Arabic,” “Armeno-Turkish,” etc. Thuse, there was no one-to-one correspondence between a language and its written form at that time. Further proofs can be found in Sayat`-Nova’s works. For example, he has aliflamas in Azeri, in which the abjad is used; but such songs are recorded in both Armenian and



Georgian alphabets, on which see the more detailed discussion in Chapter 3.

E. ēvel axēr/evvel-ahır/

Turkish for “First-last,” in which the first and/or last letters of each line should be the same.

F. uch`lama/üçleme/üçləmə

Turkish for “Making three,” in which similar phrases should be repeated three times in the same line of more than one stanza. In most cases, the verbs are the same, while the subject changes.

G. totax dekmaz/dodağ değmez/dodaq dəyməz

Turkish for “Lips don’t touch,”<sup>279</sup> in which labial sounds b, p, m, f and v are outlawed.

## 5. Improvisation

There is no set prosody for improvisation in bardic composition. The bard might use any prosody and incorporate any content when improvising. But it is a very important category of bardic composition, essential in contests.

### L. Common themes in bardic rhythmic compositions

Various scholars have attempted to categorize of themes of bardic songs. Artun’s enumeration of fourteen major themes embraces the seven listed by Levonyan.<sup>280</sup> These fourteen themes are: love, yearning, society, complaint, nature, humor, death-

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<sup>279</sup> Erdener, 1995, p. 141.

<sup>280</sup> Artun, 2011, pp. 150-208 and Levonyan, 1944, pp. 8-15.

tomb, admonition, heroism, praise-denunciation, satire, pre-wrestling, record, religion-Sufism. Meanwhile, Levonyan's listing of the seven major themes of Armenian aşuŕ songs include: love, religious-moral admonitions, historical/contemporary events, praise of various places (province, city, town, village, historical region or site), social topics, satire, personal life, and the aşuŕ's own judgment of the world, life, etc..

It is quite obvious that Artun and Levonyan based their categorizations on contemporary norms. Therefore, some themes are absent from their lists, e.g. building Socialism, praise of the October Revolution, Soviet leaders, the Red Army, and exemplary workers, and later peace and friendship between peoples, which were developed during the Soviet period.<sup>281</sup> A more inclusive categorization is necessary for a comprehensive study of the bardic tradition but lies outside the purview of this study. Still, a more detailed discussion of the themes appearing in sixteenth-to -eighteenth-centuries bardic works will be given in the next chapter.

#### M. The literary classification of the bardic tradition

Studies by Turkish<sup>282</sup> and Azerbaijani<sup>283</sup> scholars prefer to place aşık literature under the category of folk literature. This assessment, however, was rejected by Garegin Levonyan in all his works, of which the most extensive argument is afforded by a

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<sup>281</sup> Cowe, "The art of actuality: contemporary dastan of an Armenian *aşuŕ*", *Edebiyât*, Vol. NS 4 (1993), p. 268 and Namazov, 1983, pp. 129-148.

<sup>282</sup> For the most extensive argument on this issue, see Umay Günay, *Türkiye'de Âşık tarzı şiiri geleneği ve rüya motifi*, pp. 1-7, which tends to list the aşık literature as one of the three major sub-categories of Turkish folk literature, side by side with anonymous and tekke literatures.

<sup>283</sup> As reflected from the inclusion of aşık literature in Azad Nəbiyev: *Azərbaycan xalq ədəbiyatı*, vol. II, Elm, Bakı, 2006. In the book aşık songs are dealt as folklore *passim*.

speech he delivered on September 30, 1928, in which he differentiated *aşuġ* literature from folk in great detail.<sup>284</sup> His view on the *aşuġ* literature reveals great insight, but some of his views on folklore, some quite debatable. In contrast, Fr. Komitas (1869-1935, born Solomon Solomonean), a famous Armenian musicologist and field-researcher of Armenian folklore at the turn of twentieth century, offers a more reasoned approach to folklore. Here I will present their respective views on their specialized fields.

Fr. Komitas' view on folklore:

1. Anonymity of authorship: "The name of the author is known in songs which have memorable subjects ... But in time, when the song gets older, the author is forgotten or mistaken for another singer, because the song itself is what interests the peasant and not the author; the author can be this person today, another tomorrow."<sup>285</sup>
2. The lyrics and melodies of folk songs are always developing. "In general, the life of a folk song is relatively short because new songs constantly emerge to take place of the old."<sup>286</sup>
3. Folk songs can be divided according to their occasion and themes as: peasant songs, ritual songs, epic songs, ballads, ditties, and antunis. Among these types the last is unique to Armenians, as will be further explained in the next

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<sup>284</sup> It was later published in *HSXH Gitut'yan ev arvesti institute telekagir*, 1930, No.4, pp. 160-178 and included in *Erker*, pp. 258-283. For his other writings concerning this issue, see Levonyan, 1944, pp. 7-8 and 1963, pp. 147-149.

<sup>285</sup> Vatsche Barsoumian trans., *Komitas: essays and Articles*, Drazark Press, Pasadena, CA, 2001, p. 25.

<sup>286</sup> Komitas, 2001, pp. 43-44, 64-66.

Levonyan's view on aşuî songs:

1. There are always fixed examples of songs, with the makhlas in the last stanza, recorded in davt`ars. Even if they are spread orally, their melodies and subjects do not change or become conflated as in folk songs
2. The aşuî does not compose for his own sake but for the general public. He is a public figure, a professional singer. His songs are more diversified in their contents. Aşuî songs are obviously individual, but they can be used as vehicles for public opinion, or to reflect others' life.
3. Aşuî songs are diversified in forms, with multiplied rules for their prosodies and a complex art of writing. They are always sung to the accompanying of stringed instruments (not continuously but intermittently).
4. Aşuî tunes have their refined types, which are strictly associated with prosodies. They are set by metrical and formal rules according to the prosodies, which are not merely Armenian, but common to the whole Near East.

Several major contrasts between folklore and aşuî songs are apparent from the views of Fr. Komitas and Levonyan, suggesting that aşık literature cannot be interpreted as a branch of folk literature. Building on this differentiation, I think it is important to bear in mind that though mainstream bardic literature employs syllabic prosodies, some bards also utilize 'arūd meters, thus uniting elements of elevated divan literature with genuine Turkic folk poetry.

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<sup>287</sup> Komitas, 2001, pp. 14-15.

Secondly, while composed in local spoken vernaculars, bardic songs also feature borrowings from the divan literature as well, not only in form and genre but also content and rhetoric.

Judging from these features, it can be argued that bardic literature forms an intermediate register between elevated poetry and folklore, as Levonyan has shown.<sup>288</sup>

## Section 2 Some peculiarities of the Armenian aşuġ tradition

After discussing the general history of the bardic tradition, this section focuses on various aspects of training, ambience, and performance that distinguish the Armenian aşuġ tradition.

### A. Training

Two major aspects of training deserve mention here. The first is the use of the Armenian language in training Armenian aşuġs, which rather implies that both master and disciple are ethnically Armenian. The second concerns inter-ethnic training. As mentioned above, the fact of Armenian aşuġs studying with Turkic masters is amply documented, however, no example seems forthcoming of an Armenian master training Turkic disciples.

Regarding the qualification process, the most significant variation is the role St. John the Precursor and the monastery dedicated to him in Mush play in Armenian aşuġ tradition instead of Khidr.

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<sup>288</sup> Levonyan, 1963, p. 148.

## B. Potential Armenian religious ašuġs

We have noted the presence of several Sufi bards in an Islamic context. This generates the question as to whether parallel cases existed of Armenian clerics training and performing as an ašuġ. This question involves two major Armenian poets Naġaġ Yovnat`an (1661-1722) and Paġtasar Dpir (c. 1683-c. 1768) who are often portrayed as ašuġs in monographs on early modern Armenian literature<sup>289</sup>. But in my opinion, it is very questionable to call them “ašuġ”s, if judging by their experience and works. Whether they meet the criteria of a bard would determine whether their works would be discussed in the following chapters.

The main argument adduced for calling them ašuġs is that they compose in meters made popular by ašuġs on themes popular in ašuġ literature.<sup>290</sup> However, poetic form in and of itself is not sufficient to identify an author as an ašuġ. No evidence exists that either Naġaġ Yovnat`an or Paġtasar Dpir studied bardic performance formulae with an established bard, or that they performed anywhere as a bard. Our knowledge of their life is limited and concentrates on their ecclesiastical career. Naġaġ Yovnat`an was a deacon in the Armenian church and served in that capacity in a number of places in then Iranian Southern Caucasia. In contrast, Paġtasar Dpir was born in Constantinople,

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<sup>289</sup> For example, on the Sayat Nova Cultural Association’s webpage introducing famous Armenian ašuġs: <http://sayat-nova.org/ashughs/?lang=HY> as retrieved on Oct. 11, 2015; Arġak Ć`opanean even published his book on Naġaġ Yovnat`an as: *Naġaġ Yovnat`an aġuġġ ew Yovnat`an Yovnat`anean nkariġ`ġ*, Hratarakut`iwn Tigran Khan K`elekeani, Paris, 1910.

<sup>290</sup> Asatur Mnaġ`akanyan and Œuġanik Nazaryan, *Naġaġ Hovnat`an: banasteġcut`yunner*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakġ`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1951, p. XXVI. For Paġtasar Dpir, the only comment I have found is from Levonyan: “by his many songs he is a taġasac` ... and by many songs also an aġuġ, as a Œirin, a Œivani” (as quoted from Œuġanik Nazaryan: *Paġtasar Dpir: Taġikner*, Sovetakan Groġ Hratarakġ`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1985, p. 53). However, without the context, it is not clear whether Levonyan is merely using figurative speech here.

took holy orders at an early age and was always devoted to church activities, ended as a high-rank clerk. Consequently, it is difficult to imagine he had the opportunity to become a formal disciple under the instruction of a master bard.

Granted the improbability of their training and functioning as *ašuġs*, their works also do not easily align them with *ašuġs* either. While Naġaġ Yovnat'an's love lyrics are written in *aġuġ* meters, in colloquial Armenian, and an *aġuġ* style, his works of moral-religious admonition are all composed in monorhymed stanzas, a form common in medieval Armenian *taġ* lyrics, but very rare in *aġuġ* works. Moreover, some of his satirical works are constructed as whole with no division into stanzas and employ rhyme schemes that do not conform to any *aġuġ* rhyme scheme either. As for Paġtasar Dpir, his published works reflect both pure classical Armenian, hybrid classical Armenian and Turkish, and pure Turkish. Furthermore, his songs are composed chiefly for church milieus rather than secular performance. Moreover, no matter how close his meters fall to bardic examples, the tone of the compositions is solemn, distinguished both from the colloquial and popular bardic style. Based on these facts, I include Naġaġ Yovnat'an's songs in bardic styles in the following chapters, where necessary, but generally exclude those of Paġtasar Dpir.

### C. Performance

Apart from issues of some Armenian bards employing multiple languages in their repertoire and inscribing songs in their *davt'ars* in the Armenian and Georgian script, it is significant that the *saz* occupies a different status among Armenian *aġuġs*. For Turkic *aġık/aġıqs* it is the essential instrument, but among Armenians seems not to have

enjoyed anything like the same prestige. Thus, in a note on the first Armenian song in his *Davt`ar*, Sayat`-Nova claims that he masters three stringed instruments, the *kamancha*, *tar*, and *tambur*,<sup>291</sup> without naming the *saz*. Similarly, according to contemporary oral sources collected by Aram Eremean, eighteenth-to-nineteenth-centuries Isfahani Armenian *ašuġs* like *Łul Yovhannēs* and *Yart`un-Ōlli* took *chongur* along with them. Also, in a photo of the famous nineteenth-century Armenian *ašuġs* *Ĵivani* and *Ĵamali*, the former is playing the *kemenche*, while the latter the *santur*.<sup>292</sup>

During the Soviet Era quite large *ašuġ* ensembles were established in Armenia. While those included the *saz* alongside the *tar*, *santour*, *kamancha*, *kamani* and *tav kamani*, when performing on a smaller scale, the *saz* might disappear from the scene, leaving *tars*, *kamanchas*, *santurs* etc. in front, as is paralleled in some contemporary performances.<sup>293</sup>

Forms of Armenian *ašuġ* performance lack the quasi-official and quasi-religious performance and feature only popular and secular forms. Levonyan provides descriptions of Armenian *ašuġs*' performance in coffee houses, random street performances, and the procedures governing two sorts of contests (*banavēč*), oral (*banavor*) and distant (*heřaka*), in his book.<sup>294</sup> The latter is a contest among *ašuġs* who live in different places. When one (side) composes a song, which might be overtly or covertly challenging, or mocking against certain other *ašuġ(s)*, the latter party would

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<sup>291</sup> Quotation and translation will appear later in the section about Sayat`-Nova's life.

<sup>292</sup> So far the earliest source of this photo that I have seen is Levonyan, 1944, p. 27.

<sup>293</sup> See, for example, the website of the Sayat-Nova Cultural Union, <http://sayat-nova.org/category/news/>, as retrieved on Sept. 30, 2015.

<sup>294</sup> Levonyan, 1944, pp. 80-84 and 1963, pp. 196-197.



compose a song in response. The process of challenge and response was carried out by correspondence, in the public press, or in the oral dissemination of their songs. It can hardly be called a performance, since it does not necessarily involve any audience. As it is absent from discussion in Turkish monographs, it is uncertain whether it existed in Turkic milieus.

### Section 3 Examination of some details in Sayat`-Nova's life and after

This section will examine only those traceable details mentioned by Sayat`-Nova himself in connection with the general features already discussed in this chapter. Much of the discussion is based on the bard's Davt`ar, both the songs and his own comments, of which Azeri song No. 81 occupies a preponderate position. This song is a *vuĵut`lama*, or “pseudo-autobiographical” song according to its genre. As discussed in the treatment of this type of bardic genre, it must be used with caution. The sections possibly containing hints about his training and qualification as an aŗuĵ mainly encompass his adolescence and early adulthood:

.....

Ōn bir ilum t`amam ōldi ĉ`un k`i ōlaĵaĵam ahlu,  
Ōn ik`i ilum t`amam ōldi t`ap`ŗurdilar ustak`ara.

Ōn uĉ` ilum t`amam ōldi ōrandum t`amam sanat`,  
Ōn durd ilum t`amam ōldi ustama et`urdum xalat`,

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Ōn beŗ ilum t`amam ōldi manŗur ēt`tum aĵ u ĵara.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> This line is strange, since according to the rhyme scheme, it should be about his sixteenth year. But if it was, the number alt`i (six) would have broken the syllable rule.

Ōn ed[i] ilum t'amam ōldi hala ōlmamišam dastan,  
Ōn sak'iz ilum t'amam ōldi gordum gul u gulustan,  
Ōn dołuz ilum t'amam ōldi gezdum Habaš u Hindistan,  
Igirmi ilum t'amam ōldi lal sat'aram sovdagara.

Igirmi bešum t'amam ōldi girip` meydana uzaram,<sup>296</sup>

.....

(“My eleventh year passed, since (it is time) I became (truly) part of the family.  
My twelfth year passed, they entrusted me to a master craftsman.

My thirteenth year passed. I learned the trade to perfection.  
My fourteenth year passed. I sent my master a robe of honor.

.....

My fifteenth year passed. I threw black and white scattered (all about).<sup>297</sup>

My seventeenth year passed. I had not yet become a public-reciter.  
My eighteenth year passed. I perceived the Rose and the Rose-garden.  
My nineteenth year passed. I journeyed to Abyssinia and India.  
My twentieth year passed. I sell rubies to a merchant.

My twenty-fifth year passed. Entering the public square, I half-closed my eyes in rapture.”)<sup>298</sup>

One of the keywords here is the term *dastan* “story/story-teller” in the line about seventeen-year old. If we follow Dowsett’s interpretation as public-reciter, with regard to the bardic tradition, it can apply to performing bard as well. Building on that, it would seem that what Sayat`-Nova describes in the previous lines does not concern his ašuf identity at all, but his other trade. This fits the life-situation of many bards who were not full-time performers, as explained in section 1. However, if we follow Baxč`inyan’s translation as “famous”, that would yield very little about Sayat`-Nova’s ašuf career. In

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<sup>296</sup> All the transcription here follow Baxč`inyan, 1987, pp. 262-265.

<sup>297</sup> According to Dowsett’s explanation, most probably this line means that he became literate at this age. Dowsett, 1997, p. 63.

<sup>298</sup> Dowsett, 1997, p. 59.

regard to both possibilities, the exact meaning of this line seems difficult to construe.

In contrast, the line about his twenty-fifth year seems more explicit. There are different interpretations of the original text, but whether we follow Dowsett in transcribing the final verb as “suzaram”, and interpreting the line as “Entering the public-square, I half-close my eyes in rapture”; or Baxč`inyan in interpreting the verb as “uzaram” and rendering “I exert effort in the arena,”<sup>299</sup> the line appears to present the “I” performing in the public square, which is quite standard for an ašuġ. On this basis it can be asserted that Sayat`-Nova had already become a performing ašuġ at this age. If the first conjecture for his seventeenth year is correct, then we might be right in inferring an eight-year period of ašuġ training in the interim. Such an apprenticeship is not unusual for ašuġ training either, as noted in the section on ašuġ training.

After his years of ašuġ training in the vujut`lama, Sayat`-Nova does not mention his master ašuġ by name. But in notes to Armenian songs Nos. 4 and 5 in the Davt`ar, the bard states that these songs follow the mode of an Azeri song by a certain Dosti.<sup>300</sup> Most Armenian scholars accept Axverdean’s opinion that this Dosti might represent the master Ašuġ with whom Sayat`-Nova had studied. With regard to the latter’s ethnic identity Armenian scholars claim Dosti is Armenian, while Azerbaijanis regard him as their compatriot. Evidence on the Armenian side is that Axverdean declares that a tombstone from the Xoġivank` Armenian cemetery in Tiflis bears this name,<sup>301</sup> while

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<sup>299</sup> Baxč`inyan, 1987, pp. 264-265.

<sup>300</sup> Baxč`inyan, 1987, pp. 20-22.

<sup>301</sup> Axverdean, 1852, preface, p. VI. However, he did not give the image of that tombstone. Since the Khojivank` cemetery has been leveled by large from the Soviet period well into Georgia’s new independent era, it is hardly possible for scholars to trace this so-called “evidence” now.

no concrete proof is adduced by the Azerbaijanis. The name Dosti means “of friend” or “friendship” in Persian and must refer to the bard’s stage name, one that both Turkic and Armenian bards might have borne. Moreover, Axverdean’s identification of the *aşuġ* Dosti in Sayat’-Nova’s *Davt’ar* as the same *Aşuġ* Dosti who was interred in *Xoġivank’* cemetery also lacks corroboration. Hence the issue remains moot.

If Sayat’-Nova’s *aşuġ* training and his master bard are difficult to pin down on the basis of extant written sources, his musical ability is definitely testified in his note to Armenian song No. 1:

... Yis mġdsu vurt’i Arut’ins, pstuc’ inĉ’ori yarsun tarin glus dri amenan xaġin, ama surb Karapeti karoġut’enov sovrec’a k’amanĉ’en u ĉ’ongurn u [t’]amburen.<sup>302</sup>

(... I am Arutin, son of a pilgrim to Jerusalem, have been working on all songs for thirty years from childhood, with the empowerment of St. John the Precursor, I learned the *kamancha*, *chongur*, and *tambour*.)

Unfortunately, it is one of the very few solid data on Sayat’-Nova’s *aşuġ* career. Other details like his possible parallel career as a mill weaver or dyer, argued for from his frequent reference to textiles,<sup>303</sup> the reason for his becoming an *aşuġ*, the revealing dream and pilgrimage, his promotion to court, etc., may be permanently lost.

Judging from Armenian *aşuġ* songs composed after Sayat’-Nova, it is quite safe to assume that they did not undergo any influence from his works. No later Armenian *aşuġ*

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<sup>302</sup> Baxĉ’inyan, 1987, p. 15.

<sup>303</sup> “It is a common tradition in Armenia that Sayat’-Nova was a weaver by trade (probably by virtue of the mention of the *khalat’*) or a dyer (by virtue of the master of ‘white and black’ at the age of 15 (or 16) claimed in the poem) ... it is far from improbable that Sayat’-Nova learned the trade of the weaver, a major industry in Georgia for centuries ...”. Dowsett, 1997, pp. 8-10.

ever used foreign vocabulary as extensively as him. Indeed, at least from ašuf Shirin, who flourished in the 1840s, some Armenian ašufs attempted to compose in purer Armenian idiom, a movement which trended later in the century. Even among Tiflis Armenian ašufs who flourished only a few decades after him, his influence is not easy to find, judging from the existent songs of Šamč`i Melk`ō and K`ič`ik-Nova. Satirical works occupy a large proportion of the former's existent works which differs significantly from Sayat`-Nova, and might be used to explain their differences in style. Meanwhile, only eight of the latter's songs are preserved, in which the style is quite conventional, whether the topic is love or religious themes. Nevertheless, since the majority of his songs might have perished together with his davt`ar, which was burnt by his wife at his deathbed, it might be questionable to judge his true style on these eight songs only. Later in the nineteenth century, new themes, many expressing patriotism, freedom, equality, and the promotion of knowledge, in association with nationalism, made their way into Armenian ašuf songs, culminating in the works of Ĵivani.

Sayat`-Nova's relatively light influence on nineteenth century Armenian ašufs may in part be attributed to the prevailing conditions of life. Before the introduction of modern communication, the majority of bards were local, with only a few of them attaining regional significance, while their musical legacy was temporary. As new skillful bards emerge, the old would fall into oblivion. Consequently, the fact that Sayat`-Nova still lingered in the memory of Tiflis Armenian elders in Gēorg Axverdean's time, a century after his forcible retirement to the monastery, is itself very

unusual.

The general profile of the bardic tradition, the distinctive features of the Armenian *ašuġ* tradition, traceable information about Sayat`-Nova's career as an *ašuġ*, and a few other peripheral questions have been discussed above. In the following chapters, I will address the literary aspects of his songs in the general context of sixteenth to eighteenth century bardic songs in order to elucidate how conventional or individual/innovative the former are.

## Chapter 3

### Sayat`-Nova's Armeno-Azeri compositions in the general context of sixteenth to eighteenth centuries bardic literature

Since existing studies of Sayat`-Nova have not provided a detailed contextualization of his works within the broader development of sixteenth-to-eighteenth-centuries bardic literature an overall sketch will be attempted here. Subsequently, I will consider the relation of Sayat`-Nova's Armeno-Azeri works within the wider category of contemporary Armeno-Turkish aşuġ literature.

#### Section 1 General features of sixteenth to eighteenth centuries bardic literature

The primary characteristics of Early Modern bardic literary works can be described as follows.

The language employed (Turkic, Armenian, Georgian, etc.) largely retained its simplicity and vernacular affinities. Only a very few bards were impacted by regional traditions of elevated poetry, such as Ömer and Gevheri by the Perso-Turkic tradition and Yart`un Öġli by Armenian *taġasac`ut`iwn*, hence approaching in turn the language of Ottoman Turkish divan poetry or classical Armenian. Moreover, although formal elements (genres and prosodies) became more diversified and complex, the most popular forms everywhere remain the quatrain of eight- or eleven-syllable lines (semayi/semai/gərayli or İoşma/koşma/qoşma).

The most popular themes are oriented towards love and religious and ethical

admonition oriented. Moreover, literary devices in bardic literature are far simpler than those of elite divan or ecclesiastical literature. As explained in Chapter 2, the *tejnīs* genre relies on *jinās*, a sort of word game. But this literary device is essentially a form of pun, and only a few of its varieties are used in bardic literature, less than those typical of Divan literature; while other forms of word games in elevated Perso-Turkish literature, e.g. the *qalb* (anagram)<sup>1</sup> and *ishtiḡāq* (paronymy),<sup>2</sup> hardly exist in bardic literature.

## Section 2 Figures of Speech

On the basis of an extensive reading of sixteenth-to-eighteenth-centuries bardic literature, I have isolated the most popular figures of speech employed in that corpus. For clarity, I cite the corresponding terms from Arabic, Persian, and Turkish rhetoric where appropriate. Most of the examples of these figures have been drawn from Sayat`-Nova's Azeri songs.

### A. Phonetic Figures:

1. Alliteration<sup>3</sup>
2. Dodağdeğmez in Turkish, or Wāsi` al-shaftein in Arabic (not moving the tongue) applies both to the literary device and the songs that exploit it.<sup>4</sup>

Sayat`-Nova combined both alliteration and dodağdeğmez and even *jinās*

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<sup>1</sup> E.J.W. Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, Luzac & Co., London, vol. 1, 1900, p. 119.

<sup>2</sup> Gibb, 1900, p. 120.

<sup>3</sup> There is no comparable device in Divan literature, nor in Ottoman Turkish.

<sup>4</sup> This genre should contain no labial sounds (p, b, f, v, m).



(homonymy) (to be explained below) in Azeri song No. 70.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the lexeme t`ar exploited for alliteration, which serves both as Persian tār/Azeri tar “string” and an abbreviated form of Armenian t`arm “fresh, new, green”, is repeated in each line twice or thrice, in some cases in a semantic role, but not in others, at the bard’s discretion. The resulting song is more of a word game than a serious piece of literature and hence was most probably improvised for a contest, rendering it one of Sayat`-Nova’s most difficult songs.<sup>6</sup> Granted its characteristics, it is hard to translate into another idiom, however I provide the first two stanzas by way of illustration. The present rendering is purely experimental, aiming to convey the literal meaning in English without attempting to preserve its complex form. It depends heavily on the parallel Armenian translation in Baxč`inyan’s 1987 collection, especially for the homonymies:

T`ar laši t`ar gozi t`ar sia sia,  
 T`ar t`ahrin degiš[ti] t`ar uzał uzał,  
 T`ar xali t`ar hindi t`ar sia sia,  
 T`ar t`akrar lalat`ti, t`ar uz ał uz ał.

T`ar ač`ildi t`ar č`iç`agin t`ar č`igin,  
 T`ar injıt`ti t`ar t`ellarin t`ar č`igin,  
 T`ar nazani t`ar geindi t`ar č`igin,  
 T`ar ayrildi, gezar t`ar uzał uzał.

(Tender eyebrows, tender eyes, come together,  
 The tender white complexion on the face just changed.  
 The vivid mole as black as an Indian,  
 Repeatedly polluted the spotless honor.

Her flower just wildly blossomed,  
 Her hair just hurt her shoulders,

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<sup>5</sup> Baxč`inyan, 1987, pp. 244-245.

<sup>6</sup> As the endnote to this song comments: Baxč`inyan, 1987, p. 491.

Her graceful newly worn gilded attire,  
She newly departed, wandering far, far away.)

3. Concatenation (*zincirleme* in Turkish) is a figure in which the last word or phrase in one line is repeated at the beginning of the next. The last word/phrase of the previous stanza becomes the first word/phrase in the next, while in the first stanza, the last word/phrase of the second line should be repeated at the beginning of the third line also. To illustrate this, I cite the first two stanzas of Sayat`-Nova's Azeri song No. 32.<sup>7</sup> No examples are currently extant from earlier aşiks, but presumably Sayat Nova was building on a pre-existing tradition.

Vat`anumdan aştum sonam gormaga,  
Baxtum, bezanmişti, man öldum *t`alas*,  
*T`alasam* ałlumdan, salam vermaga,  
Dedum dili şak`ar, labua *bal as*.

*Bal asmiş* labina, şak`ar na desam?

.....

(I left my hometown to see my chick,  
I looked, she was astonished, I speeded up.  
I speeded up because of my wit, in order to greet (her),  
I said, "Sugar-tongued One, let honey flow from your lips!"

Honey flew from her lips, what if I say sugar?  
.....)

#### B. Semantic Figures:

1. Macaronic verse (*talmī`* in Arabic) relates to composing a poem in more than one language. A song written with this technique is called *mulamma`*. The most famous example of this figure is Sayat`-Nova's quadrilingual song<sup>8</sup> in five quatrains. The first

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<sup>7</sup> Baxč`inyan, 1987, pp. 184-185.

<sup>8</sup> Azeri song No. 53, Baxč`inyan, 1987, pp. 216-219.

consists of eight hemistichs, of which the first and third lines begin in Georgian and end in Persian, while the second and fourth begin in Azeri and end in Armenian, as illustrated below. Meanwhile, each line of the next four quatrains is composed in a different language in the order Georgian, Persian, Azeri, and Armenian. Here I quote Baxč`inyan's transliteration and Dowsett's English translation of the first stanza:<sup>9</sup>

Es ra momivida? Bibin č`i k`ardem!  
 Var get` boyni burug, tanen dus arac,  
 Čkva cavagebine az šeši nardem,  
 Divana g[e]ziram, banen dus arac.

(What has happened to me? [Georgian] Look what I have done! [Persian]  
 Clear off, you hangdog, [Azeri] thrown out of house-and-home! [Armenian]  
 I have ruined my mind! [Georgian] I am spikenard from the bottle. [Persian]  
 I wander about, mad, [Azeri] bereft of reason!) [Armenian]

2. Comparison (tashbīh in Arabic)<sup>10</sup> relates to both simile and metaphor according to Gibb. Its forms in bardic songs are simpler than those of elevated poetry. Examples are too numerous to cite.<sup>11</sup>

3. Hyperbole (mubālagha)

Ĵavahir ēšxunda man ōlmišam t`uĵ,  
 Ĵami lēzēl idum, dard ēt`ti p`irinĵ.<sup>12</sup>

([I was] a jewel, through love for you I became cast iron.  
 I was a gold chalice, pain turned [me] into bronze.)

<sup>9</sup> Dowsett, 1997, pp. 194-195.

<sup>10</sup> Gibb, 1900, p. 111.

<sup>11</sup> Moreover, Sayat`-Nova's innovative tropes will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4, section 3.

<sup>12</sup> Azeri song No. 36, Baxč`inyan, 1987, pp. 186-187.

4. Allusion (talmīh) is not a very popular figure of speech. It seems only those better-educated bards like Sayat`-Nova employed it more in their works. Sayat`-Nova's allusions might come from Scripture, religious traditions, or literary masterpieces. Famous lovers from Near Eastern literature, like Leyli and Majnun, Shirin and Farhad might be used randomly to allude the ardor of love. Biblical or religious allusions mostly appear in songs of moral-religious admonition. The following example refers to Moses', or Aaron's rod.

Ne ałajdur ōzi ħuru yašadi.<sup>13</sup>

(What wood was it? It was dry, but growing!)

5. Homonymy (jinās) is a sort of pun. In the first volume of his *History of Ottoman poetry*, Gibb offers the following general description:

Tejnis ('Homonymy' or 'Paronomasia') is a variety of pun and one of the greatest favorites among rhetorical figures, subdivided into a large number of classes. It consists of the employment of words with the same or similar forms and sounds.<sup>14</sup>

Many of these rhetorical figures are required by particular genres. For example, alliteration is required by aval-axër (first-last), concatenation by zinjirlama (lit. placing in chains). Meanwhile, some genres reflect the figure they require, e.g. talmī` and mulamma`, jinās and tajnīs, and Dodağdeğmez. Still, tropes are the most common figures in bardic compositions. In this regard I would contend that there is a tendency

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<sup>13</sup> Azeri song No. 59, Baxç`inyan, 1987, pp. 226-227.

<sup>14</sup> Gibb, 1900, p. 116.

in Armenian and Azerbaijani *aşuġ* /*aşıq* works to intensify their use gradually over time. In the works of early Azerbaijani *aşıqs* like Qurbani and early Armenian *aşuġs* like Łul Egaz the frequency of tropes is not very high, usually only one per line, and lines with tropes are more often interspersed between narrative lines. However, in the works of eighteenth-century *aşuġ* /*aşıqs*, especially in the middle stanzas of love songs, it is not unusual for one line to feature more than one trope, and two or three lines with tropes to occur in a given quatrain.

Of these four major aspects of sixteenth to eighteenth cc. bardic literature, language and literary devices are more intimately interrelated than form and theme, as is easily predictable, since bardic literature reflects a lower register than elevated literature, as indicated in the previous chapter.

### Section 3 Differences in genre distribution in sixteenth to eighteenth centuries Turkish, Azerbaijani, and Armenian bardic compositions

Most sixteenth-to-eighteenth-centuries bards adhered to syllabic meters, as is true of the overwhelming majority of minor Turkish *aşıks*, who utilized them almost exclusively, together with the famous Pir Sultan Abdal and Karacaoġlan. Although only *aşıks* Ömer and Gevheri bore the significant influence of divan literature, thanks to their rich output, the proportion of songs in ‘*arūd*’ meters in sixteenth-to-eighteenth-centuries Ottoman Turkish *aşık* literature attains a level disproportionate to the total number of Turkish *aşıks* composing in them from that period. Presumably these two bards’ extensive use of ‘*arūd*’ derives from their family, education, and Sufi background, in

contrast to all other early modern Turkish aşiks whose background is known to us. Furthermore, the affinities with different Sufi orders many Turkish aşiks possessed may also have contributed to the difference in their themes as well, as will be discussed later.

In contrast, the use of ‘arūd prosody was never extensive among Azeri aşiqs of this period who had a penchant for more technically complex genres in syllabic meter, like *tecnis/təcnis* and *muamma/qıfılbaş*. The most striking examples derive from the famous Azerbaijani aşiqs Qurbani and Xəstə Qasim.<sup>15</sup> This diversity seems to point to stylistic differences between bards in the Ottoman and Iranian spheres.

The validity of the above finding is supported by the bifurcation of the output of ethnic Armenian aşuflar on both sides of the border in alignment with their Turkish and Azerbaijani counterparts. However, the extremely small pool of works by early modern Armenian aşuflar, which amounts to only about a dozen songs in each category, demands further investigation, such as editing all Yart’un Ōfli’s sixty-five Turkish songs rather than only the ten published by Aram Eremean in the 1940s, in order to define the issue with more assurance.

In addition, early modern Armenian aşuflar in the Iranian sphere exhibit a preference for the *muxammaz*, a type of song with five-line stanzas. As suggested by the name and its popularity among Muslim poets in general, it seems likely that the genre emerged from an Arabic rather than Armenian matrix. However, though hardly represented in the works of early modern Turkish aşiks and only marginally more frequent in the

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<sup>15</sup> Qurbani’s collection includes 8 *təcnis* and 3 *qıfılbaş*, for which, see Kazımov, 1990, pp. 151-164. Xəstə Qasim’s collection includes 16 *təcnis* and 48 *qıfılbaş*, for which, see Hüseyn İsmayılov et al., *Xəstə Qasim*, Nurlan, Baku, 2010, pp. 105-115, 146-207.

Azerbaijani case (mostly from the eighteenth century alone), the form is frequently found in Armenian *aşuġ* songs of Isfahan and enjoyed great popularity among Tiflis Armenian *aşuġs*.

Another notable contrast between the three bardic traditions relates to the number of stanzas normative in their song production. In general, the norm for short bardic songs ranges from three to five stanzas. In the Ottoman sphere, songs with both four and five stanzas are common in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, while three-stanza songs are much rarer. Meanwhile, Azerbaijani *aşıqs* more frequently composed songs with three or four stanzas, while five is much more frequent among later Armenian *aşuġs*, whether composing in Armenian or Azeri. This relates both to Isfahani Armenian *aşuġs* like Yart'un Ōġli and Tiflis Armenian *aşuġs*, among whom it was especially popular, in the period from the middle or late eighteenth century. In contrast, the earliest Isfahani Armenian *aşuġ* Łul Ėgaz who flourished in the late seventeenth century and other early Isfahani Armenian *aşuġs*, prefer four-stanza songs over five-stanza variants, while three-stanza songs were not very frequent from the beginning. However, until the late eighteenth century it was still common to find three-stanza songs by Azerbaijani *aşıqs*.

### Section 3 thematic differences in sixteenth to eighteenth cc. Turkish, Azerbaijani, and Armenian bardic compositions

Clear differences distinguish the distribution of themes in early modern Turkish, Azerbaijani, and Armenian bardic compositions. Similarly, distinctive sectarian

connotations are observable in the works of Ottoman aşiks, e.g. Pir Sultan Abdal, who belonged to certain Sufi orders only found within the Ottoman borders in this period. In contrast, the sub-genre shah-Khatai is distinctively Iranian. Songs in this sub-genre must include praise to Shah Ismail I, founder of the Safavid dynasty and head of the Safavi order. Meanwhile, Christian themes treated in religious songs by Armenian aşufls from both the Ottoman and Iranian domains will be explored in the coming paragraphs.

The following are the primary themes developed in sixteenth-to-eighteenth-centuries bardic composition, beginning with those most frequently employed.

#### A. Secular Love

The three most popular subdivisions of the theme of love in the bardic repertoire are:

1. Eulogistic description of the beloved's physical beauty, predominantly her static appearance, in some cases involving dress, ornaments, and perfume, and less frequently the sweetness of her voice and the elegance of her movements.
2. The bard's passion as lover for his beloved.
3. The bard's suffering and longing as lover for his beloved, mostly after their separation whether forced or voluntary on the beloved's part, and his desire or entreaty for the beloved to relent and, more often than not, to effect a reunion.

Of these three topics the first is by far the most popular, as it is required by the sub-genre *güzelleme* (panegyric of female beauty) of the *koshma*, while the others are usually presented together, since the bard's suffering forms the major theme of the sub-genre *şikayətnamə* (work of complaint)<sup>16</sup>. Moreover, portraying the suffering of love

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<sup>16</sup> This term is seen only in Azerbaijani publications, e.g. Hüseyn İsmayılov et al.: *Xəstə Qasim*,



automatically implies the presence of passion as well. Combination of the first two themes, or all three, is also very often interwoven in one bard's songs as well. However, in regard to the form of songs treating such topics, the following are the three most common:

1. Direct first person presentation, ie. In the voice of the bardic lover.
2. Reported dialogue between the lover in the first person and the beloved in the third person, mostly as direct quotation, as styled in Turkish as *dedim dedi* and in Armenian as *ěsi ěsaw* ("I said, she said").
3. Allegory of the rose and nightingale, which may be in the form of a dialogue between the rose and nightingale or between the lover and the nightingale.

#### B. Religious-Moral topics

1. Praise of religious figures involves eulogy of Imams (mostly Ali), Ismail Shah Khaṭā'ī, or the founder of the order to which a Sufi aşık/aşıq belongs<sup>17</sup> and Christian hierarchs like Šamč'i Melk'ō's *Ov srbazan Yosep` minj kat`ufikus* "Oh Most Reverend Joseph our Catholicos"<sup>18</sup>.
2. Divine love in the Early Modern period almost certainly bears Sufi connotations, frequently expressed in the motif of the moth and the flame associated with the doctrine of self-annihilation in the process of total union with the Divine. The fact that this concept is rejected by the Judaeo-Christian tradition explains the lack of representation

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Nurlan, Baku, 2010, passim. I have not even found a comprehensive explanation of it in any monograph.

<sup>17</sup> Praises for all these persons can be found in Pir Sultan Abdal's songs. For the introduction and quotations, see: pp. 81-90.

<sup>18</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 285.

of this theme in verse composed by Christian Armenian bards. Similarly, on the rare occasions where the moth and flame motif is employed by the latter, the connotation in the majority of cases is to secular love alone. This contrast is also highlighted in depictions of the gender of the beloved. Since God is conceived as male in the three Abrahamic religions,<sup>19</sup> any reference to female physicality or conventional character traits (Armenian *nazani* “graceful” or Turkic *nazlı/nazlu* “coquettish”) cogently indicate that the portrayal is of a woman as beloved. Consequently, a review of love songs produced by Christian Armenian *aşuflar* reveals that most of those belong to the latter category, and hence are secular in type.

3. The *Yaşname/zavsat`lama/vücutnamə*, as noted in Chapter 2, possesses a pseudo-autobiographical character. Since one of its formative elements is a concluding admonishment on the transience of life, I classify it as a subgenre of the moral-religious category. The most important single manifestation of this genre is undoubtedly Sayat`-Nova’s *vujut`lama*.

#### C. Songs for bardic competition, or vocal duel

Since the songs for bardic competition, or vocal duel described in Chapter 2 are improvised in most cases, the themes might be assigned ad hoc at the organizers’ or bards’ discretion. Therefore, if a song is not explicitly stated as being for competition, it can be difficult to identify, as in the case of some of Sayat`-Nova’s songs discussed in the last section of this chapter. Since the purpose of these songs is to overcome a

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<sup>19</sup> In turn, the image of God in Sufi songs is male. See: Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical dimensions of Islam*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC, 1975, pp. 289-292.

rival, praise and boasting on the part of the bard about himself or those siding with him and depreciating or jeering at the other side are common for such songs, as they constitute one of the strategies in such competitions.

#### D. Complaint

The Complaint is usually directed at one's unlucky fate, for example, Sayat'-Nova's *Ašxarēs mē p'anjara ē* (My world is a prison). Exceptions I have observed include the composition *Zġumn amusnut'ean* "Regret about Getting Married"<sup>20</sup> by the Armenian ašuġ Ĺul Yovhannēs' which is written in the voice of a woman lamenting her unsuccessful marriage, the Armenian ašuġ Ĺul Ēgaz's *Ć'kay dard imac'ot* (No one understands (my) pain),<sup>21</sup> and the Azeri aşıq Abbas Tufarğanlı's *Bəyənəm* (Unlikeable),<sup>22</sup> which features social critique on a different topic in each verse.

#### E. Satire

Satire can be directed at the foibles of persons in the ašuġs' circle or a wellknown contemporary, such as Šamč'i Melk'ō's song beginning *Ankač ara govk'd asim Talavrēc'i šun Aṛak'il* (Listen, I 'm singing your praise, Aṛak'il, dog from Talavr).<sup>23</sup>

#### F. The composer's personal experience

Songs describing the composer's personal experience treat subjects like Qurbani's seasonal migration<sup>24</sup> or a longer journey, as, for example, Ĺul Arzuni's *Mer askn yimarac'el an* (Our nation have become fools), which presents an account of his journey

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<sup>20</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 202-203.

<sup>21</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 77-79.

<sup>22</sup> Araz Dadaşzadə, *Abbas Tufarğanlı: 72 şe'r*, Gənclik, Baku, 1973, p. 9.

<sup>23</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 271-274 (with a variant).

<sup>24</sup> "Almağa gəlmişəm", Kazımov, 1990, p. 74.

to India in which he met with many misfortunes.<sup>25</sup>

#### G. Description of certain places

The description of certain places mainly applies to praise of natural beauty or the prosperity of a city. A good example is provided by the Armenian aşul Čerean Ōġlu Minas' song commencing Elbark` jezi ban mi patmem (Brothers, let me tell you something) that describes an Ottoman metropolis, probably to be identified as Constantinople.<sup>26</sup>

#### H. Description of certain items

The description of certain items may be didactic, as in Łul Arzuni's *Grič` "Pen"*,<sup>27</sup> or lyrical, as a number of bards' songs on their musical instrument, e.g. Sayat`-Nova on his K`amanch`a, or Qurbani on his saz.<sup>28</sup>

#### I. Feast with entertainment (majles)

Songs for a feast with entertainment (majles) are similar to songs for competition in that they might also be improvised, with the topic decided ad hoc. Still discernible songs of this kind usually talk about the magnificence of the feast, the joy of drinking and gathering, the beauty of the attending ladies or dancing girls, etc., like Yart`un Ōlli's *Tal i veray selanoy* "Song at table".<sup>29</sup>

#### J. Far from one's hometown or village

Songs on being far from one's hometown or village can be divided ethnically. In

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<sup>25</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 92-98.

<sup>26</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 343-350.

<sup>27</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 85-87.

<sup>28</sup> "Aġacdandır", Qurbani, in Kazımov, 1990, p. 55.

<sup>29</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 260-261.

Armenian cases, such songs treat the panduxt or *larib*, i.e., the economic emigrant as in the *taf* or other Armenian literary genres. Yearning for one's family predominates in such songs, while the status of a helpless figure in a foreign environment is often described. A good example is provided by Yart'un Ōli's *Ēarib mards larib turbat' ašxarhi* "Stranger man roaming in the world"<sup>30</sup>. In Turkic, or more exactly, Azeri cases,<sup>31</sup> it is more often yearning for one's home village after leaving it, as in Qurbani's case,<sup>32</sup> without necessarily describing the cause for the departure.

#### K. Vituperation

The only certain vituperative song I have noted is directed at a specific figure, that of Qurbani against a certain vizier.<sup>33</sup>

#### L. Humor

The humorous song (*yalanlama*) is a sort of humorous or satirical song made up of absurd and illogical statements. From this period, it is only represented by one song from the Armenian *ašu* Yart'un Ōli.<sup>34</sup> The third stanza is reproduced here a specimen of the absurdities inherent in such songs:

Babamki pēs canr em, osku pēs tetew.  
T`anak`i pēs siptak em, maconi pēs sew.  
Gži pēs xelōk` em, xonarhi pēs xew.  
Č`unay or xelk` č`unem, Kasen ahlēkean.

(I am as heavy as cotton, as light as gold.  
I am as white as ink, as black as yogurt.  
I am as reasonable as a madman, as excited as someone meek.  
Since I have no brain, they call [me] knowing.)

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<sup>30</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, p. 237.

<sup>31</sup> I have not encountered Turkish *aşık*'s songs on this topic from the early modern period

<sup>32</sup> "Qaldi", Qurbani, in Kazimov, 1990, p. 112.

<sup>33</sup> "Yetirməsin", Qurbani, in Kazimov, 1990, p. 49.

<sup>34</sup> Sahakyan 1961, pp. 247-248.

## M. Petition

The only petition song is Sayat`-Nova's *Dun ēn glxēn imastun is* (You are profoundly wise), his plea to King Erekle II.

## N. For relative(s)

The only song for a close relative is Qurbani's song on his mother.<sup>35</sup>

## Sub-group for Ottoman Aşıks include:

The *Alkıslama* (panegyric of individuals) hardly exists outside the praise of valiant warriors, which can be merged with the category of heroism (yiğitleme) or song of courage and war, which is only popular among Turkish military aşiks and lacked any counterpart in the Iranian sphere.<sup>36</sup> Such songs either praise a single exemplary soldier or officer's bravery, or promote morale, which almost universally requires recalling the courage and heroic deeds of the soldiers themselves or their predecessors in earlier battles, in which the Ottomans appear as the constant victor.

## Armenian Subgenres:

A. The confession of sin or declaration of faith from a Christian perspective, e.g. Šamč`i Melk`ō's *Hawatovs hawatam* "I believe in my faith,"<sup>37</sup> which references the famous prayer with a similar title by the twelfth-century catholicos poet Nersēs Šnorhali.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> "Gedim", Qurbani, in Kazimov, 1990, p. 52.

<sup>36</sup> The only exception from this period is a song by Qurbani in praise of Nuru Bey's bravery: "İndi", p. 127. Artun, pp. 190-193. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there are Armenian aşul songs composed in either Turkish or Armenian language in praise of the defense in Zeyt'un in 1862, or other occasions. See Xaç`ik Amirean, *T`urk`alezu Hay aşulner, (Ösmanyan kaysrut`iwn, 16-20rd darer)*, J. Kasbarian, Aulnay-sous-Bois, Paris, 1989, pp. 90-110.

<sup>37</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 283-284.

<sup>38</sup> See: Armenian Church of North America, Western Diocese: *Hawatov xostovanim= I confess with faith, prayers of St. Nersess the Graceful*, Los Angeles, CA, 1966.

B. A mother's instructing her daughter about how to be a good wife and daughter-in-law in her husband's family. Examples include Yart'un Ōlli's *Erg matanoy* "Song of the ring."<sup>39</sup> This motif originated from a matrix in Armenian folklore.

C. Under the rubric of contemporary events a number of early modern Armenian *ašuġs* compose laments on the destruction of cities or regions as the result of military campaigns. These embrace the sack of New Julfa by the Afghans and Nader Shah after the fall of the Safavids,<sup>40</sup> or Agha Mohammad Shah's invasion of Georgia and attack on Tiflis in 1795 to assert the strong central rule of the new Qajar dynasty in Iran.<sup>41</sup> Granted that Caucasia lies on a seismic fault, the theme also depicts earthquakes such as that which struck Yerevan in 1679<sup>42</sup> or Constantinople in 1778.<sup>43</sup>

D. The dispute between two animals or two natural or artificial items always focuses on which is more powerful or useful. For example, both master Ľul Yovhannēs and his disciple Yart'un Ōlli have debate songs between between heaven and earth, or the soul and body.<sup>44</sup> Two such Armenian songs are also attributed to Sayat'-Nova, one a dialogue between a shepherd and a wolf, the other a contention between sour soup and mutton. However, since neither is included in the two manuscripts,<sup>45</sup> as mentioned in Chapter 2, their authenticity cannot be ascertained. This theme derives from rhetorical

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<sup>39</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 262-263.

<sup>40</sup> Baġer Ōlli's songs: Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 110-111, 115-118.

<sup>41</sup> Šamč'i Melk'ō: Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 296-300.

<sup>42</sup> Safar Ōlli: Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 355-358, with a variant.

<sup>43</sup> Čerean Ōġlu Minas: Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 338-339.

<sup>44</sup> All included in Sahakyan, 1961. For Ľul Yovhannēs' debate between heaven and earth, see pp. 186-188, and, for his debate between soul and body, see pp. 183-185. For Yart'un Ōlli's debate between heaven and earth, see pp. 253-256, and, for his debate between soul and body, see pp. 251-252.

<sup>45</sup> Armenian songs, appendix B, No. 7 and No. 8 (62 and 63 by accumulation), in Baxč'inyan, 1988, pp. 70-72.

training at Armenian institutions of higher learning, which employed Hellenistic manuals like Aphthonius and Theon of Alexandria. Ultimately, the theme can be traced back to scribal practice in the Ancient Near East.

Comparison with the fuller list of themes drawn up by Artun suggests that certain categories had not yet been developed in this period or only gained popularity subsequently.<sup>46</sup> For example, the *salavatlama* employed before a wrestling contest or other public performance and *ağıt* (dirge) are totally absent. Nor are the *Kargışlama* and *taşlama* (or *takılma*), i.e. songs of criticism, the former against an individual, the latter also treating social issues, fate, etc., numerous either.

#### Section 4 Distinctive Features of sixteenth to eighteenth centuries Armeno-Turkish aşu literature

Armeno-Turkish literature, the corpus of Turkish works composed by Armenians in the Armenian script, comprises materials intended primarily for a Turkish-speaking Armenian community (e.g. Turkish translations of the Bible and religious literature) as well as texts recorded with the intent of reaching a wider audience by oral dissemination.<sup>47</sup> Naturally, this classification includes works of Armeno-Turkish

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<sup>46</sup> There seems to be an overlap in Artun's categorization as well. For example, his category of yearning (*özlem*) includes yearning for the bard's love, already listed in the previous category of love (*aşk*) (Artun, 2011, pp. 164-165). Similarly, the category of admonition (*öğütleme*) is hardly distinguishable from religious teaching in the Early Modern period, and better represented by Levonyan's title of "moral-religious admonitions" (Artun, 2011, pp. 183-190). Artun also attempts at further differentiating some categories like satire and admonition, but his subdivisions do not fit the Early Modern period well. Thus extant sixteenth-to-eighteenth-centuries bardic satirical songs, for example, seem rather random and are merely directed against individuals.

<sup>47</sup> On the general situation of Armeno-Turkish literature, see Hasmik Step'anyan, *Hayataŕ t'urkeren grakanut'yunē: albyuragitakan hetazotut'yun*, Erevani Hamalsarani Hratarakč'ut'yun, Yerevan, 2001. For a French translation, see Hasmik Stepanian, *Littérature arménienne en langue turque écrites en caractère arménien*, L'Académie des sciences d'Arménie, Institut d'Orientalisme, Gasprint, Yerevan,



aşuİs<sup>48</sup>. Indeed, manuscript folios containing Armeno-Turkish aşuİ songs in different collections number in the hundreds,<sup>49</sup> but unfortunately those codices have not been investigated in proportion to their volume.<sup>50</sup> In contrast, a large percentage of the published Armeno-Turkish aşuİ songs were composed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, after the period under examination. The present study is purely based on published materials, consisting firstly of Sayat`-Nova's 116 Azeri songs (edited and published in Baxç`inyan's collection) together with other research literature by various scholars, 9 of Yart`un Ōfli's 95 Armeno-Azeri songs (edited and published by Minasean), Nahapet K`uĉ`ak's 7 Turkish songs (edited and published by Ōnnik Ēganyan), and other Armenian aşuİs' works, scattered in a number of Armenian, Turkish, or Azeri publications.

Generally speaking, Armeno-Turkish aşuİs were well integrated into the norms of the genre, composing in the local Turkic vernacular, employing the mainstream prosodies and tropes, and reciting the traditional love stories.<sup>51</sup> Consequently, there are only a few songs explicitly dealing with Christian themes or shrines, while within the repertoire as a whole, the chief distinguishing factor is Armeno-Turkish aşuİs' penchant for love songs in the secular vein devoted to a female beloved rather than the erotic.

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<sup>48</sup> These should be distinguished from Armenian aşuİ songs in Turkish that were transmitted in Ottoman Turkish records in the Arabic script, which will be briefly discussed in Chapter 5. Note also that some of Sayat`-Nova's Azeri songs were written in the Georgian script in his Davt`ar.

<sup>49</sup> For a brief account of Armeno-Turkish aşuİ literature and its collections in libraries, see Step`anyan, 2001, pp. 36-42.

<sup>50</sup> So far the most comprehensive publication of these songs is Amirean, 1989. There is another collection of Armenian aşuİs' works preserved in Alevi-Bektashi literature, for which, see Mehmet Bayrak, *Alevi-Bektaşî edebiyatında Ermeni âşıkları (aşuğlar)*, Ōz-Ge Yayınları, Ankara, 2005.

<sup>51</sup> Similarly, in questions of onomasticon, only a very few receive Armenian professional names.

Granted the small number of Armeno-Turkish *aşuġ* songs under examination, it appears that the frequency of different genres or themes in this corpus is consistent with the general conclusions for bardic compositions in this period, i.e., *koshma* and *semai* prosodies prevail, while *divan*, (*dubeyt*), *mukhammas*, and *tejnis* also occur. With regard to themes, love and moral-religious admonishment/allegories predominate, while lament on personal fate and migrant (*panduxt*) themes also appear. Similarly, literary devices similarly tend to be rather plain, while rhetorical devices are mainly conventional in keeping with the *aşuġ* genre as a whole.

#### Section 5 Some General Features of Sayat`-Nova's Azeri songs

It has been argued that Sayat`-Nova's Azeri songs are the least studied component of his trilingual corpus,<sup>52</sup> and perhaps artistically the weakest,<sup>53</sup> though that corpus represents the largest output of Armeno-Turkish songs by any early modern Armenian *aşuġ*, amounting to more than the sum of his Armenian and Georgian songs combined,<sup>54</sup> as well as surpassing the output of many Turkic *aşiks/aşıqs*. Armenian scholars place most attention on his Armenian songs, which are truly his most accomplished and innovative works artistically, as will be discussed in Chapter 4. While Turkish and Azerbaijani scholars have contributed very little to Sayat`-Nova studies in general, they

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<sup>52</sup> Dowsett, 1997, p. 422. There is a section on Sayat`-Nova's multilingual composition in Baxč`inyan, 1988, pp. 133-146. For his coverage of the general features of Sayat`-Nova's Azeri songs, see pp. 137-138) and, for the Georgian songs, pp. 138-141.

<sup>53</sup> For this point, the brief treatment by scholars like Baxč`inyan and Dowsett, and the absence of Sayat`-Nova from monographs on the history of Azeri literature might be used as side proofs.

<sup>54</sup> Dowsett, 1997, p. 422.

too devote more effort to his Armenian works than those in Azeri.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, in his voluminous study of Sayat`-Nova Dowsett dedicated only about a dozen pages to his Azeri poems, much of which deal with purely textual issues.<sup>56</sup> Here I will first compare the features of Sayat`-Nova's Armeno-Azeri songs with those discussed in the first two sections, progressing from secondary issues to the four important aspects listed in section 1, i.e. language, form, theme, and literary devices. In the next section I will treat some his individual songs, concerning which I have more particular questions to raise.

One of Sayat`-Nova's distinctive traits is being the only Armenian *aşu* whose Azeri works are written in both the Armenian and Georgian scripts.<sup>57</sup> The only *davt`ar* directly available to me is that of the Isfahani Armenian *aşu* Yart`un *Öhli*, which is written in the Armenian alphabet. Publications are unhelpful with regard to the original form, as Armenian editions of Armeno-Turkish songs utilize the Armenian script, while those published by Turks and Azerbaijanis employ the Turkish/Azeri script. Sayat`-Nova's *Daftar* proves the poet's familiarity with the Georgian script. However, the reason for his choice of it to render Azeri is a matter of dispute. Scholars from Axverdean on have argued that Sayat`-Nova was more trained in the Georgian script than the Armenian,<sup>58</sup> yet, since he used both to record his Azeri songs, that reasoning does not accord with the facts.

Linguistically, Baxč`inyan is the only scholar who tries to define Sayat`-Nova's

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<sup>55</sup> Seyidov, 1954, pp.69-155 is dedicated to the study of Sayat`-Nova's songs, yet more examples are drawn from his Armenian songs than his Azeri compositions.

<sup>56</sup> Dowsett, 1997, pp. 422-434.

<sup>57</sup> In contrast, *Šamč`i Melk`ō* has only one Azeri song transmitted to us, which was inaccessible to me.

<sup>58</sup> As quoted from Baxč`inyan, 1987, p. 47.

idiolect, stating that he composed in the Ayrum Turkic vernacular, but without supplying references.<sup>59</sup>

Sayat`-Nova himself added notes on the genres of most of the songs in his Davt`ar, both Azeri and Armenian. The titles he cites are much more numerous than any other bard of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, even if we consider purely simple titles and ignore their composite counterparts. For example, categories according to prosody include *divani*, *t`aslib*, *t`ejnis*, *varsaf*, *barit`avur*, *lap`ia*, *dubeyt`* (Levonyan's *dyubeyt`*), *hazali* (Levonyan's *hazel*), and *muxammes*. Meanwhile, those according to content comprise *ilahi*, *edaglama*, *ogut`lama*, and *sujut`lama* (*vujut`lama*). Similarly, those classified by rhetorical figures include *uc`lama*, *aval-axer*, *dodaıdegmaz*, *ıaraheja*, and *zinjirlama* (or spelt as *zanjirlama*), among others. As is common in bardic practice, Sayat`-Nova names genres by their prosody, theme, and rhetorical devices at the same time. However, a careful observation of all the genres he used indicates that in this respect he is the most skillful master of all early modern Armenian *aşuřs*, and one of the most accomplished bards generally in that period. The major characteristics of his prosody are as follows:

- A. Sayat`-Nova's favorite prosody is *muxammas*, which he used in 26 out of the 66 Armenian songs of his known at that time. He also used prosodies like *dyubeyt`*, *ıořma*, *hazel*, *divani*, *rubayi*, *varsafi*, *tejni*s, etc. However, prosodies like *myustezed*, *ıalandari*, *semai*, *řarki*, *dest`an*, etc. which are favored by Turkish Armenian *aşuřs* are absent from his work.
- B. Sayat`-Nova introduced more diversity than other Armenian *aşuřs* in the prosodies

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.. The Ayrooms or Ayrooms are a group of ethnic Azeris. There are several towns named after them, fully or partly, in the trilateral border intersection of Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, so that the Ayrum vernacular should be the Turkic speech of that area.

- he used, creating some which are unique to his works.
- C. Sayat`-Nova created new composite prosodies based on the reorganization of existing structures.
  - D. Sayat`-Nova frequently appealed to poetic license to introduce foreign words for their melodiousness.
  - E. In some songs Sayat`-Nova consecutively used masculine and feminine rhymes, which is unique among Armenian *aşufl* until the mid-twentieth century.<sup>60</sup>

The five conclusions above were first observed in Sayat`-Nova's Armenian songs, but they also hold good for his compositions in Armeno-Turkish, though not as firm as in the Armenian sphere. For example, his Azeri *muxammazes* amount to 5, around 4% of the total. However, if we take into consideration the fact that apart from the Tiflis Armenian *aşufl*, the *muxammaz* is rarely found among sixteenth-to-eighteenth-centuries bards in general, its small representation in Sayat`-Nova's output fits the broader norm.

In addition to writing the largest number of Armeno-Turkish songs of any Armenian *aşufl* in the early modern period, Sayat`-Nova also produces the most diversity of forms and prosodies. Indeed, his utilization of so many technically complex forms renders him almost unique among sixteenth-to-eighteenth-centuries bards. He employed genres like *t`ejnis* (*passim*), *aval-axər* (Azeri Nos. 36, 51, 72, 113), *alip`lama* (Azeri Nos. 26, 108), *zinjirlama* (Azeri Nos. 32, 35, 68, 73) etc., in which certain

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<sup>60</sup> For further details, see "Sayat`-Novayi xaferi ta'laç`ap`ut`yan mi k`ani aranjnahatkut`yunneri masin", first published in *Sovetakan grakanut`yun*, 1941, No. 2 and later included in Levonyan, 1944, pp. 87-98. To these five characteristics Levonyan added the observation that Sayat Nova made great efforts to conform as much as classical Persian poets' stress rules as possible in his Armenian songs. However, the bard's prosodies are syllabic, not quantitative as Persian *'arūd* prosody. In addition, Levonyan did not examples in support of his conclusions.

rhetorical figures are constitutive of the genre. A case in point is the *laraheja*, which requires the bard to spell a word in each line or stanza. The names of the last letters of the spelt words bear the rhyme, and the full meaning of the whole piece depends on putting each spelt word in the place it is spelt.<sup>61</sup> It thus emerges as a complex word game.

Besides, he also created complex composite forms by using more than one rhetorical figure in one song. These composite forms he referred to by a combination of genre terms, e.g. *dodałdeymaz-zanjirlama* (Azeri No. 62), *dodałdeymaz-t`ejnis* (Azeri Nos. 63 and 70), *alip`lama-laraheja* (Azeri No. 108). He even has one song combining more than one prosody with one of the rhetorical figures, e.g. *muxammaz-bayat`i-dodałdeymaz* (Azeri No. 81). Dowsett devotes two consecutive chapters to Sayat`-Nova's versification techniques: rhyme, meter, and versification, his accomplishments in literary devices and word games, and allegory, pun, and riddle.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> The difficulty in understanding songs of this genre is shown by the fact that their transliterations and translations differ so much in Baxč`inyan's and Dowsett's works (Baxč`inyan's No. 93: Baxč`inyan, 1987, pp. 284-287; Dowsett, 1997, pp. 345-346. Baxč`inyan's No. 108: Baxč`inyan, 1987, pp. 308-311; Dowsett, 1997, pp. 342-344). Below the first stanza of Baxč`inyan's No. 104 (Baxč`inyan, 1987, pp. 302-305) is given with the necessary explanations and a tentative English translation as an example of the genre. It should be noted that this is the only song in where the formal requirement is observed in every line.

Małrubdan k`im č`əxti? K`ap` u ali`, mim, (Arabic letters kāf, `alif and mīm comprise Persian *kām*, "will, desire".)

Map` ēyla sozum ey, alip`, ze u mim, (Arabic letters ya, `alif, za and mīm comprise Azeri *yazam* "I write".)

Mašrubā et`išti jīm u alip`, mim, (Arabic letters jīm, `alif and mīm comprise Persian *jām* "cup, goblet".)

Man da ōnun k`imi gap`, alip`, ze u mim. (Arabo-Persian letters gāf, `alif, za and mīm comprise Azeri *gəzəm* "I wander".)

(Who pulled out desire from the west?  
Allow me to write down my words.  
Cup arrived at wine,  
I also want to wander like that.)

<sup>62</sup> Dowsett, 1997, pp. 234-364.

In the course of his general discussion, drawing examples from Sayat`-Nova's trilingual corpus, he successfully shows Sayat`-Nova's dexterity in word games and his command of different languages. In the three samples of Sayat`-Nova's most complex songs, two are Armenian (Nos. 47 and 55<sup>63</sup>), and one Azeri (No. 78<sup>64</sup>). Dowsett maintains that Sayat`-Nova indulges most in multifarious word-play in his Azeri verse, and further assumes "that he must have been influenced by previous Azeri verse, though it is not easy to point to definite models".<sup>65</sup> At the same time, I should add that no other bard of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries familiar to me can compete with him in this respect. In most cases, *t`ejnis* is the most technically complex genre employed. Since Sayat`-Nova's complex genres are rarely found in Ottoman, Azeri, or Persian elevated literatures either, there is a possibility that Sayat`-Nova's models have been lost, if he ever had any.

Nevertheless, Dowsett remarked that Sayat`-Nova's *t`ejnis* is not always consistent with the amount and complexity exhibited in the three examples he cites.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, the literary devices in his Azeri songs are less individualized or innovative than his Armenian songs. Indeed, most of his Azeri songs reveal a rather plain plot structure, while the tropes are conventional and can be paralleled in the works of other bards. But since innovation forms a major aspect of his Armenian songs, his Azeri and Armenian songs will be compared in chapter 4 from the perspective of consistency and focus.

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<sup>63</sup> Hasrat`yan's 51.

<sup>64</sup> Hasrat`yan's 36.

<sup>65</sup> Dowsett, 1997, p. 317.

<sup>66</sup> Dowsett, 1997, p. 301.

Now I would like to consider the possible reasons for this variation. In all probability Sayat`-Nova will have been trained in composing/improvising songs in Azeri, more particularly, the Azeri dialect current in eighteenth-century Tiflis. Among his dated songs the earliest is Azeri No. 71 of 1742, about a decade earlier than his earliest dated Armenian song. According to Hasrat`yan, there are some undated songs (e.g. Nos. 49, 51, and 67) which may have been written even earlier, not much after he began his aşuġ career.<sup>67</sup> Since the form of Oghuz Turkic now called Azeri was widespread in the Caucasus at that time<sup>68</sup>, it is plausible that his Azeri songs would have attracted a more diverse audience than those in Armenian and Georgian. Sayat`-Nova's imperfect knowledge of the Arabic script is reflected in three of his Azeri songs (Nos. 6, 26, 108). While No. 6 is a *divani*, the other two are *Alip`lamas*, and hence all three are abecedarian songs. According to convention, in these he therefore opened each line consecutively with a new letter of the abjad alphabet. However, in each of them Sayat`-Nova reveals a number of spelling errors.<sup>69</sup> All these factors serve to explain both why most of his songs are written in Azeri as well as their artistic conventionality.

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<sup>67</sup> As quoted from Baxĉ`inyan, 1987, note, pp. 488, 490.

<sup>68</sup> Dowsett, 1997, pp. 84, 173.

<sup>69</sup> For example, in No. 6, he treated *sultan*'s initial letter as *th*, which should be *s*. He starts *zalim* with *z*, when this should be *zad*, and begins *zimistan* with *zad* instead of *z*. Additionally, in No. 5, he spelt *kharāb* as *khārāb* (Dowsett, 1997, pp. 336-339). All these lead to the conclusion that he knew the names of the letters in the Arabic script for Azeri, and perhaps their forms as well, but was not familiar with Azeri orthography of in that script. Most probably he was spelling Azeri according to local pronunciation. This would be typical of the approach of non-Muslims who would be unlikely to have received a formal education in the Arabic script in a Muslim educational institution in the eighteenth century. Baxĉ`inyan's defense of Sayat`-Nova's literacy in the Arabic script (Baxĉ`inyan, 1988, pp. 287-288) is flawed in my opinion. First, his argument based on Azeri Song No. 73 is problematic as the letters involved in the argument (for details, see Hasrat`yan, 1963, pp. 268-269) are not only spelt in different forms, but also pronounced differently. It should not be difficult to know that they are four different letters if one has an oral familiarity with Azeri and only some knowledge of the Arabic alphabet, not necessarily the orthography of specific lexemes.



Meanwhile the formal diversity and frequency of wordplay, represented in those songs may be ascribed to his excellent command of bardic genres as well as the preference of his audience.

Sayat`-Nova's Azeri songs treat more than half the primary themes distinguished in early modern bardic literature. Out of the major themes, religious and moral admonishment is found almost as frequently as love, which is rare among sixteenth-to-eighteenth-centuries aşık/aşıqs composing in Azeri.<sup>70</sup> Apart from these topics, others include complaint concerning one's misfortune (Nos. 41, 66), and wandering (No. 52), among others.

## Section 6 On the possible ambience, purpose, and audience of some of Sayat`-Nova's Azeri songs

### A. Sayat`-Nova's songs composed by improvisation and possibly intended for competition

As stated above, a number of Sayat`-Nova's Azeri songs may be improvisations and/or set compositions, some of which some may have been designed for bardic competitions, as suggested by some senior scholars. For example, in his 1987 collection, Baxç`inyan asserted that Azeri songs Nos. 102 and 103 were performed at competitions, but without elucidating his reasoning.<sup>71</sup> He also argues that Azeri song No. 38 comes from a similar provenance, judging from the fact that Sayat`-Nova called it *meidani* in

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<sup>70</sup> Famous Azeri ashuqs like Qurbani and Abbas had love and admonishing themes in a rough ratio of 2:1. Only Valeh has very few love songs.

<sup>71</sup> Baxç`inyan, 2003, p. 296.

his own note, which Baxč`inyan interprets as “of the public square” i.e. for bardic competition.<sup>72</sup> The assertion that many of Sayat`-Nova’s formally complex Azeri songs were composed for competition is also reprised in his 1988 monograph.<sup>73</sup> In my opinion, apart from Nos. 38, 102 and 103, Azeri Nos. 49, 65, 69, 87 and 88 seem more likely to be improvisations, though the specific argument in each case may be different. For songs 65 and 69, the mentioning of one’s family origin and one’s confession are quite common in Turkic bardic competition.<sup>74</sup> One of the most striking examples is the bard’s reference to his parents’ origin in the last stanza of Azeri song No. 65:

Birisin diar, “Sayat`-Nova haradan?”  
 Birisin “Hind” diar, biri “Hamadan”,  
 Vat`anum T`ip`l[i]zdur, samt`-i Gurjistan,<sup>75</sup>  
 Anam Havlabarlu, at`am Halablu.<sup>76</sup>

(One says, “Where is Sayat`-Nova from?”  
 One says, “India”, another “Hamadan”,  
 My native place is Tiflis, in the direction of Georgia,  
 My mother is from Havlabar,<sup>77</sup> my father from Aleppo.)

Similarly, in the last stanza of Azeri song No. 69, he quite proudly declares himself to be a Christian Armenian:

Gun doġanda ħiblagahi,  
 K`eġ baxanlar č`ak`sun vahi,

<sup>72</sup> Baxč`inyan, 1987, lyric text: pp. 190-191; editor’s endnote: p. 486. Yet no further argument for this usage is given here either.

<sup>73</sup> Baxč`inyan, 1988, pp. 137, 246-247.

<sup>74</sup> Artun, 2011, p. 113.

<sup>75</sup> Here the phrase “samt`-i Gurjistan” is Persian, containing a Persian *ezafe* structure.

<sup>76</sup> Baxč`inyan, 1987, pp. 236-237.

<sup>77</sup> Armenian Havlabar (Georgian Avlabari) is the name of the major Armenian residential area in Tiflis/Tbilisi.

Sayat`-Nova dini sa[h]i,  
Ink`ar ēt`maz Ērmanidur.<sup>78</sup>

(When the sun is born in the direction of prayer (fibla)  
May awry observers experience pain.  
Sayat`-Nova's religion is correct.  
He is an Armenian who does not make mistakes.)

For songs 87 and 88, Sayat`-Nova himself acknowledged that both were for a feast (mejles) and to the same tune on the same date in his note to the latter.<sup>79</sup> Although it was possible that these songs were pre-composed, this seems less plausible. For other songs, I would argue that if they lack a consistent meaning, but are characterized by the complexity and significance of its rhetoric figures, they are much more likely to be an improvisation or set composition, performed for competition. An example is Azeri song No. 49, which is a *yarana* built on the word *xal* “mole”, as according to Sayat`-Nova's own naming it is a “xali vra yarana”.<sup>80</sup> Apart from the first, each line starts with a different declension of the phrase *bir xal* (a mole). The whole song is structured around the description of the belle's mole without further semantic development. There is no reference to the time of its composition. According to Hasrat`yan, this song was composed when Sayat`-Nova was only a novice.<sup>81</sup> However, no matter how feasible this hypothesis may sound, another assumption can be made, that the theme “mole” was required for Sayat`-Nova to improvise a song on. In consequence, the bard's quick wit

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<sup>78</sup> Baxč`inyan, 1987, pp. 240-241.

<sup>79</sup> Baxč`inyan, 1987, pp. 274-279. Indeed No. 89 is in the same tune (as Sayat`-Nova himself mentioned) and the same style, therefore one might argue that it was also composed for a feast, though this is not corroborated by the note.

<sup>80</sup> Baxč`inyan, 1987, pp. 210-211.

<sup>81</sup> As quoted from Baxč`inyan, 1987, p. 488.

was more appreciated rather than a meaningful or beautiful message. In my opinion, these four songs are the most likely candidates for improvisation among Sayat`-Nova's Azeri compositions. However, apart from them, the argument can be made for others also being improvisation(s) and/or set composition(s) for performance at competitions based on similar reasoning. This applies, for example, to Azeri songs Nos. 20, 51, 55 and 70, which all share a complex form. No. 20 is a *t`ejnisi-šahmohrla*, i.e., *t`ejnis* in the manner of *šahmohr*,<sup>82</sup> which requires a certain word to be repeated several times in every line. In this song, the word repeated three times in each line, is *xas*, with a wide semantic range in Azeri, including “special, private, one’s own, select, noble” as in Persian,<sup>83</sup> and “(bread) well baked, baked brown” in Azeri, also forms the *jinās*, which makes the song well-nigh untranslatable. No. 51 is an *aval-axər*. No. 55 is a *šahmohrlu-yarana*, i.e. in *yarana* prosody with the rhetoric figure of *šahmohr*. But here the *šahmohr* is far easier than in No. 20, since the word *gordum* “I saw” is not found in the first two lines, appearing at the beginning of the remaining 18 lines (with the fifteenth line lost), but not repeated in many of them. All these irregularities make it sound closer to alliteration than *šahmohr*. No. 70 is called a *dodałdeymaz-t`ejnis*, but actually combines a *šahmohr* on the word *t`ar*, repeated three times in each line. In its fifth and final stanza Sayat`-Nova even focused the *jinās* on his professional name.<sup>84</sup> All these techniques

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<sup>82</sup> Persian, “king’s seal”, “precious stone said to be found in a serpent’s mouth or a dragon’s head”. Dowsett quoted from Steingass, p. 308. Dowsett assumes this word for repetition as the “jewel”, and discusses the complexity of this song on the same page.

<sup>83</sup> That should be spelled *khašš* in the Arabic script.

<sup>84</sup> This stanza reads:

T`ar yarun darina, t`ar Sayat`-Nova,  
T`ar ov t`ar ovla t`ar sayat` nova, (According to the interpreter, here the phrase *sayat` nova* shall be understood as *say at`un ova*.)

render it another of Sayat`-Nova's most complicated songs. Apart from their figural complexity these songs possess less inner semantic connection among the stanzas, suggesting that they were composed for formal rather than semantic appreciation. In turn, the crux of their formal complexity might be propounded as a requirement imposed on the bard rather than his own predilection. Unfortunately, there is not much clue about the ethnicity or identity of Sayat`-Nova's competitors or the audience for whom he composed these songs. Still it can be conjectured that frequently bards would come to Tiflis from other cities to participate in a contest. Due to the status of Oghuz Turkic as the fundamental performing language of the bardic tradition and the likelihood that most of those bards would have been Turkic, it seems natural that so many of Sayat`-Nova songs plausibly composed for contests were written in Azeri. A case in point, Azeri Song No. 69 was even more probably composed against a Turkic Muslim bard, judging from Sayat`-Nova's proud reference to his distinctive faith and ethnos as a Christian Armenian. Similarly, if a song was performed in a public square, it is more likely the audience was general and involved a mixture of all the ethnicities present in Tiflis.

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T`ar derya uzinda t`ar say at` nova.  
T`ar sayat` t`ar t`ak`i t`ar uzał uzał.

(Just for the beloved's door [or 'happiness' as in the Armenian translation ?], Sayat`-Nova,  
Simply go hunting, throw stone to the field [or 'on the flat field' as in the Armenian translation ?].  
Or as on the surface of the sea, count the number of ships [or 'make effort again' as in the  
Armenian translation ?],  
Like a hunter, until afar, afar [or 'Like fishermen, we swim, swim!' as in the Armenian  
translation ?].)

Baxč`inyan, 1987, pp. 244-245. Much of the interpretation of the homonymies is based on the Armenian translation, but with my own interpretation, as the translation of the parallel Armenian translation is given side by side above.

## B. Possible audience of some songs

It is accepted that Sayat`-Nova served for many years at the court of the Georgian king Erekle II, but many indications in his Davt`ar lead us to infer that not all his songs were composed for that milieu. Georgian is obviously the language of the court of Kartli and Kakheti, therefore it should be safe to assume that out of Sayat`-Nova's trilingual corpus his Georgian songs were most likely composed for court performance. The situation is less clear for his Azeri and Armenian compositions. Some of his works, like Azeri songs Nos. 9 and 11, are composed in Armenian and Azeri consecutively. However, Sayat`-Nova's most famous macaronic song is composed in four languages, expressing a bitter regret and a greatly troubled mind, on March 6, 1758, one year before his dismissal from the Georgian court. Dowsett afforded a discussion of this idiosyncratic song, which focuses on its background rather than its artistic merits. According to Dowsett, the composition reflects a nervous breakdown perhaps related to his precarious status in court, which may ultimately have led to his dismissal.<sup>85</sup>

Let us now consider the last stanza of Azeri song No. 96:

Var idi Nadir-Şah, xalip`a Łazar,  
Ō vaxt melik` idi Aia Minişkar,  
Hani ēyla divan? Hani ēyla şar?  
K`ovul, yoxdur, Sayat`-Nova neylasun?

(There were Nader Shah, Caliph<sup>86</sup> Łazar,  
At that time the melik` was Miskin Agha,  
Where is law? Where is order?

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<sup>85</sup> All the quotations and paraphrases relating to this song are based on Dowsett, 1997, pp. 193-199, with his English translation.

<sup>86</sup> Note here that Sayat`-Nova used the term caliph for the catholicos, supreme patriarch of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

Oh heart, there is none. Sayat`-Nova, what are you doing?)

Here the bard mentions Nader Shah, the overlord of Iran (r. 1736-1747), the Armenian Catholicos Łazar Ĵahkeć'i (r. 1737-1751), and the Armenian mayor of Tiflis Miskin Agha, or Agha Ašxarhbekean Behbut`eanc` (1734-1768 in office, intermittently from 1746-1760), who received the title Miniškarbaši "Hunting Master" from Nader Shah.<sup>87</sup> From the past tenses used to describe them it seems this song was written between 1751 and 1760, when none of the three were in their posts. The dating mechanism listing the suzerain, Armenian catholicos and local official representing the Armenian community indicates a well-established practice among Armenian scribes in producing the colophon to a manuscript being copied. As a result, the song in question was probably directed to an Armenian audience.

C. Bilingualism or multilingualism in Sayat`-Nova's audience and their possible identity as reflected in some songs

Sayat`-Nova's multilingualism is easily perceptible from his corpus, but what of his possible audience? As mentioned above, the very existence of Azeri-Armenian macaronic songs proves the bilingualism of certain Tiflis Armenians and suggests that Tiflis Armenian ašuĴs could perform in both these languages at that period. Similarly, the relative frequency of Persian phrases in Sayat`-Nova's Azeri songs as, for example, *samt`-i GurĴistan* in Azeri No. 59 indicates the familiarity of the city's aristocracy and

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<sup>87</sup> Baxć`inyan, 1988, pp. 296-298. For more biographical details, see *Haykakan Sovetakan Hanragitaran*, Haykakan SSR GA, Haykakan Sovetakan Hanragitarani glxavor xmbagrut`yun, Yerevan, vol. II, 1976, p. 382 and Samvel Karapetyan, *T`iflisi k`alak`agluxnerě*, RAA Gitakan Usumnasirut`yunner, No. 5, HH GAA "Gitut`yun" Hratarakć`ut`yun", Yerevan, 2003, pp. 35-36.

merchant community with the language. Thus, apart from the four-language macaronic song, Sayat`-Nova inserts short Persian sentences in three of his Azeri songs. There is only one very short sentence in the second line, first stanza of his Azeri song No. 58 *č`i mixast* “What did she want?”, which is used to form a *jinās* with the Azeri phrase *č`imixast* (Chinese satin<sup>88</sup>). While in Azeri No. 38 there is one hemistich in each of the first four stanzas written in Persian; and in Azeri No. 104, each first hemistich in the first three lines in the fourth stanza is Persian.

Another fact is that though Sayat`-Nova had translated at least one song from Turkish into Georgian,<sup>89</sup> no bilingual Georgian-Azeri macaronic song exists. This might imply the relative lack of familiarity with Azeri on the part of the Georgian population. Tiflis Armenians, as reflected from the example of Sayat`-Nova himself, were largely fluent in Georgian.

#### D. Songs with explicit Christian reference

A number of Sayat`-Nova's Azeri songs, macaronic or not, contain Christian allusions and connotations (e.g. Nos. 5, 11, 59, 62, 84). As quoted above, No. 11 relates to the martyrdom of St. John the Precursor (Surb Karapet in Armenian). Similarly, the Nativity and Holy Sepulcher are mentioned in No. 5,<sup>90</sup> while Adam, Abraham (Ibrahim, Khalil as his title “Friend of Allah” in Islam) and Mary appear in No. 59, and No. 62 refers to Genesis and the sin of Adam and Eve, the protoplasts' expulsion from Eden,

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<sup>88</sup> According to Baxč`inyan's comment, this is rather a corrupted form of the correct phrase *č`ini xas* (Baxč`inyan, 1987, pp. 224-225).

<sup>89</sup> This translation is not included in the main part of Baxč`inyan's 1987 book, but at the end of notes to Sayat`-Nova's Georgian songs, since its Azeri original is lost. See Baxč`inyan, 1987, pp. 478-479.

<sup>90</sup> It is noteworthy that, though this song belongs to the *xat`ayi* genre, Shah Ismail Khaṭā'ī is not the figure venerated here.



and Abraham's fast. One might argue that these latter songs might be appropriate for Muslims as well, since all the figures mentioned are venerated as prophets in Islam, too. However, the case of No. 84 is very different, since in the last two lines of its fourth stanza, the bard claims:

Har k'im, k'i Isani al[l]ah soyl[a]maz,  
Dili tu'tulsun, ut'anmaz, na ič'un?<sup>91</sup>

(Whoever does not say, 'Jesus is God',  
Even if his tongue gets tied, he would not repent. Why?)

In his note to the song Sayat'-Nova explicitly states that it is a *varsal* composed for Christians to know God.<sup>92</sup> I have not encountered another Armenian *ašuġ* composing Turkish songs with such explicit Christian expressions. But it is not rare to observe Armenians composing works in Turkish for religious purposes, as we have seen from Paġasar Dpir's works, either in pure Turkish or Armenian-Turkish macaronic forms.<sup>93</sup> As for the possible occasions on which these songs were performed, while arguing No. 84 belongs in a purely Christian setting, the others might be acceptable in a mixed Christian-Muslim milieu. However, No. 11 might be more suitable in an Armenian Christian setting, since the saint is more venerated among Armenians than Georgians and far less than Muslims in general.

#### E. Songs with Islamic contents

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<sup>91</sup> Baxč'inyan, 1987, pp. 272-273.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Such songs are numerous in Šušanik Nazaryan, *Paġasar Dpir: Taġikner*, Sovetakan Groġ Hratarakč' ut'yun, Yerevan, 1958. For macaronic examples, see canto XLIX, pp. 152-153 and, for pure Armeno-Turkish, see canto LX, pp. 169-170.

There are a fair number of Sayat`-Nova's Azeri songs, which contain a variety of Muslim themes, including the mystic love of Sufi literature. It should be emphasized, however, that though Sayat`-Nova used genres of Islamic origin and in some songs employs phrases more proper to Muslims than Christians, Islamic notions still occupy a small place few in his oeuvre.

Azeri songs No. 1-5, 7-10 and 37 encompass two genres that, judging by their name or contents, were originally associated with distinct Shiite or Sufi connotations. No. 1-5 are *šahxat`ayi* or simply *xat`ayi*, a specific kind of *divan/divani* originally dedicated to Shah Ismail I (*Khaṭā'ī*) by Iranian Shiites. Universally, such songs begin with the formula "It is said that Shah *Khaṭā'ī*" (in Azeri: "Dədilər ki Şah Xətai"), in praise of him, and more frequently than not the song is dedicated to Shiite belief as well.<sup>94</sup> Similarly, Nos. 7-10 and 37 form a special kind of *ləzali*: *İlahi* "of God", the title of the genre indicating its (originally) religious content, including divine love. As mentioned above in discussing the general features of Early Modern Armenian *aşul* composition, the love songs in that corpus are predominantly secular and devoted to a female beloved. This applies to most of Sayat`-Nova's *xat`ayis* and *ilahis* also. Only two *xat`ayis* (Azeri songs Nos. 1-2) and one *ilahi* (Azeri song No. 37) diverge from this pattern. The *ilahi* talks about *aşullu* i.e. his identity as an *aşul*, rather in the original sense of "lover", which can be explained in either a secular or mystic sense. However, the two *xat`ayis* are not about love or the beloved, but rather the *ustad* "master" or *p`ir* "sage".

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<sup>94</sup> Baxč`inyan, 1987, pp. 445-446, and 1988, p. 186.

Among the other songs with an explicit Islamic reference is Azeri song No.91. In the fourth stanza Sayat`-Nova admonishes:

Ładi mip`liz, ĉ`un k`i idi ĩaradan,  
Łahar ět`di er u gogi ĩaradan,  
Bu uĉ`nasta yazilup`tur Łaradan,  
Birin K`it`ab, birin Łuran, birin Inĵil.

(The body is incapable, since it was from earth,  
[The Lord] created earth and heaven from darkness,  
These three works were written by the Almighty,<sup>95</sup>  
One [is] the Book, one the Qur`an, one the Gospel.)

This song relates to the three “peoples of the book”, the *inĵil* and *Łuran* referring to the Muslim and Christian scriptures, while *k`it`ab* (literally the book) should be interpreted as the *taurāt*, the Jewish Torah. As a result, it is likely that the song was composed for a Muslim audience.

The Qur`an is mentioned on two other occasions in Sayat`-Nova’s Azeri corpus. In Azeri song No. 27, the Qur`an and Abraham are referenced in different stanzas. The Qur`an is represented as one of the three havens of a dervish: woolen cloak, the Qur`an and the stick (wood), while Abraham appears in an allusion as one who observed the way of God. The song’s main focus is not very clear and its stanzas do not seem very cohesive, and different interpretations exist. However, the vagueness of this world, the dervish or friar, the master (p`ir-usta), and identity as an aŗul (aŗullul) all appear in this

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<sup>95</sup> It should be mentioned that the “earth” in the first line, “darkness” in the second line, and “All-mighty” in the third line are all the same word *ĩara*= Az. qara in the original, which is the pun in this stanza as required by the t`ejnis genre.

song, affording it a strong Sufi flavor. Azeri song No. 101 is another example of songs lamenting the ephemerality of the world. Of the 20 lines of its 5 stanzas, 17 are questions, starting with the word *hani* “where?”. Sayat`-Nova referred to more than 17 allusions to lament on, in which religious, literary, and historical figures like č`angli-pir (another title for S. Karapet<sup>96</sup>), Rustam, Shirin, Farhad<sup>97</sup>, and Nader Shah all appear. But the most striking feature is the juxtaposition of St. John the Precursor with the Prophet Muhammad (Rasul), the Twelve Imams, and the Qur`an, since the last three are all definitely Islamic, with the Twelve Imams apparently of Twelver Shiites.

Senior scholars like Hasrat`yan and Paruyr Sevak have already addressed such songs. Baxč`inyan maintains that though there similarities exist between Sayat`-Nova's world view and Sufism and certain Sufi expressions in his songs, his claim in other songs to be a Christian Armenian suggests that such Azeri songs should be regarded as the continuation of the *aşul* tradition, which was associated with Sufism.<sup>98</sup> Earlier in the same monograph, Baxč`inyan quotes the Russian scholar Gordlievsky to the effect that Turkish-speaking Armenian *aşuls* circulating in Asia Minor possessed songs composed for both Christian and Muslim audiences in their repertoire.<sup>99</sup> Against that background, it would be reasonable for Sayat`-Nova to create songs with distinct Islamic connotations for a Muslim or mixed audience. However, in his Georgian song against the current Georgian Catholicos-Patriarch Antoni I, Sayat`-Nova referred to

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<sup>96</sup> See the note to Azeri song No. 11 in Baxč`inyan, 1987, p. 482.

<sup>97</sup> These three are literary figures first popularized through the *Shahnameh*.

<sup>98</sup> Baxč`inyan, 1988, p. 337.

<sup>99</sup> Baxč`inyan, 1988, p. 106.

himself as a *sop`i*, i.e. Sufi.<sup>100</sup> Various explanations have been adduced for his usage of this term.<sup>101</sup> Baxč`inyan estimates that perhaps Antoni accused the bard of being involved with Sufism.<sup>102</sup> However, as commented above, though Sayat`-Nova employed genres of Islamic origin, and in some songs phrases proper for Muslims rather than Christians, overall the number of Islamic references in his work are very few. Only three of his Azeri songs treat more explicitly Islamic issues, while five refer to Christian subjects. Thus, In Azeri Song No. 5, one of his Azeri *xat`ayis*, Sayat`-Nova talks about Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulcher:

Lut`su šarip` nuri mazar, k`an u mak`andur bəzum,  
Uč` k`ilisa, t`axti imam, aziz simaḡ bəzumdur.<sup>103</sup>

In Jerusalem the Sepulcher of honorable light is our life-and-death,  
Vaḡaršapat, See of the Catholicos, the precious image<sup>104</sup> is ours.)

It is very noteworthy here, that in the Azeri original, Sayat`-Nova uses Arabic and Turkic terms to expressions Christian notions. Thus Jerusalem is referred to by its Arabic name, while the city of Vaḡaršapat, where the Armenian catholicos' residence of Ejmiacin is located, is denoted by its Turkish name Uč` k`ilisa (lit. "Three churches"). Most strikingly, as the poet had referred to the Armenian catholicos as "caliph" (*xalip`a*) in Azeri Song No. 96, discussed under the second topic in this section, so here he

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<sup>100</sup> Baxč`inyan, 1988, pp. 116-117.

<sup>101</sup> An example is Dowsett, 1997, pp. 144, 146.

<sup>102</sup> Baxč`inyan, 1988, p. 337.

<sup>103</sup> Azeri Song No. 5, lines 9-10. The English translation heavily depends on the parallel Armenian translation.

<sup>104</sup> It is noteworthy that in the Azeri original Sayat`-Nova used Muslim terminology for the corresponding Christian forms. In Azeri Song No. 96, discussed under the second topic this section, Sayat`-Nova used the term "caliph" (*xalip`a*) for the Armenian Catholicos, whereas here the term "Imam", is found.

utilizes the term “Imam” appropriate in an Azerbaijani Shiite context. On this basis, it is perhaps plausible to propose that the references to p`ir and ustad in Sayat`-Nova’s xat`ayis broached above actually refer to Christian hierarchs.

Sayat`-Nova has one xat`ayi in Armenian as well, which is also about love. However, according to Dowsett’s account, the bard’s own note on this song begins with the Georgian phrase “(By) Ch(rist’s divinity), this divani is very good;”<sup>105</sup> while in the 1987 Armenian version of his collected works, the first half, both the letter k` and an interpretation regarding the letter are absent.<sup>106</sup> If the absence in Soviet publications is due to political pressure, and Dowsett’s interpretation is reliable, it would mean that Sayat`-Nova did not view Shah Ismail Khaṭā’ī with the regard the latter’s extreme Muslim followers had shown. The titles he gave to Khaṭā’ī like “god” (haḡ),<sup>107</sup> “creator of the world” (ēli-alam yaradan)<sup>108</sup> etc. thus illustrate rather maintenance of aşık convention<sup>109</sup>. At the same time, it is striking that Sayat`-Nova opened his Davt`ar, including both the Armenian and Azeri sections, with the genre of xat`ayi. This might suggest that at most he treated the originator of the genre as a patron saint for his art like St. John the Precursor in beginning with songs dedicated to Khaṭā’ī, as M. Naryan has concluded.<sup>110</sup> In contrast to Naryan, Mirəli Seyidov gave a correct explanation to

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<sup>105</sup> Dowsett, 1997, p. 270.

<sup>106</sup> Baxč`inyan, 1987, p. 15; also absent from the editors’ endnote, pp. 445-446.

<sup>107</sup> Azeri Song No. 1, line 1, Baxč`inyan, 1987, pp. 128-129; Dowsett, 1997, p. 269.

<sup>108</sup> Azeri Song No. 3, line 1, Baxč`inyan, 1987, pp. 130-131; Dowsett, 1997, pp. 269, 271-272.

<sup>109</sup> Dowsett went so far as to interpret most of Sayat`-Nova’s xat`ayis as songs about secular love, which might not be fully correct if we take into consideration the next issue, that Sayat`-Nova started his Davt`ar with xat`ayi songs. See: Dowsett, 1997, p. 270.

<sup>110</sup> “Apollon-Karapet- Şaxat`ayi”, in HSSH MS Barjaguyn ev Mijnakarg Masnagitakan Krt`ut`yan Komite; Erevani X. Abovyani anvan Haykakan Petakan Mankavaržakan Institut, *Sayat`-Nova, gitakan ašxatut`yunneri žofovacu*, Haykakan Petakan Mankavaržakan Instituti Hratarakč`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1963, pp. 164-193. The conclusion comes on pages 183, 190. Despite that, Naryan did not interpret the word Şaxat`ayi correctly.

the term “Šaxat`ayi” at length, but interpreted him as the supreme god in Sayat`-Nova’s songs.<sup>111</sup> It is noticeable the genre xat`ayi is absent from other early modern Armenian aşuls’ works whether in Armenian or Turkic languages as well as from the works of many Azerbaijani aşıqs.

In conclusion, Sayat`-Nova was a pious Christian, but he was not averse to cultivating aspects of the ashik tradition more than other Armenian aşuls, both in the genre and content of songs with Islamic associations. In doing so, it always appears that he treated Muslims’ belief in a serious, respectful way. This approach should be regarded as proof of his broad-mindedness in matters of religion.

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<sup>111</sup> Mirəli Seyidov, *Azərbaycan-Erməni ədəbi əlaqələri (Orta əsrlər)*, Elm Nəşriyyatı, Baku, 1976, pp. 163-172.

## Chapter 4

### Sayat`-Nova's Armenian composition in the context of sixteenth to eighteenth centuries bardic literature

#### Section 1 General features of sixteenth to eighteenth century Armenian aşuġ literature in Armenian

As argued in Chapter 2, the form of bardic composition under examination represents basically one core tradition regardless of ethnicity and language. Hence, it is only once the contours of that tradition have been established that it is possible to consider areas of possible diversity among the practitioners during this period. Within this context, I would argue that the Armeno-Turkish songs and Armenian songs of sixteenth to eighteenth century Armenian aşuġs do not differ fundamentally in style. Songs in both categories are composed in the Armenian aşuġs' local dialects, either Armenian or Turkic. They cover the same major topics of love and moral-religious teaching, as well as others relating to personal experiences, current events, etc., though in much fewer numbers. However, among the published songs of sixteenth to eighteenth century aşuġs, Armenian compositions feature some themes distinct from those in Armeno-Turkish songs. For example, there is no long narrative Armeno-Turkish *dastan* songs so far published, while several exist in Armenian, as mentioned in the section on bardic themes in Chapter 3.<sup>1</sup> Armenian songs even include some minor themes not

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<sup>1</sup> All these are included in Sahakyan, 1961, the first two in n. 17, chapter 3. Safar Ōlli on the earthquake in Yerevan: pp. 355-356. Ćerean Ōllu Minas on the earthquake in Constantinople: pp. 336-337; on the metropolis: pp. 343-354.



represented in bardic songs written in Turkic. Additionally, there are lyrics to the pen or other utensils for their usefulness,<sup>2</sup> topics absent in Armeno-Turkish songs as well as in Turkic aşık/aşıq songs. Among Yart'un Ōfli's Armenian works, there is a *yalanlama*, i.e. humorous song comprised of absurdities<sup>3</sup>. Regarding marriage and family life, Łul Ēgaz has a song in the voice of a woman lamenting her unhappy marriage, while Yart'un Ōfli has one written in simple classical Armenian in the voice of a bride to her own family before departing to join her bridegroom, and another in colloquial Armenian in the idiom of a mother admonishing her daughter.

As in the case of Ottoman aşiks, some of whom composed in literary Ottoman Turkish resembling that of divan literature, some more educated Armenian aşuġs composed a few songs in a register closer to classical Armenian, though the numbers are insignificant both in the context of sixteenth to eighteenth century Armenian aşuġ literature and in proportion to the range of Turkish aşık songs in the higher register. Only one stylistic difference between songs in Armenian and in Turkic vernaculars deserves mention, that of the degree of delicacy in the depiction of female beauty. In the works of Turkic bards' together with Armeno-Turkish aşuġ songs the depiction of female beauty is more general and less detailed. The bards often focus on no more than three features of the belle in describing her beauty, often doing so in one stanza. Armenian songs, in contrast, extend the description to more than two stanzas on occasion with fuller depiction of the belle's physical attributes, ornaments, inner merits,

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<sup>2</sup> Łul Arzuni's *Griĉ* "Pen": Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 85-87, as mentioned in Chapter 3, n. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Sahakyan 1961, pp. 247-248, as noted in Chapter 3, n. 34.

and reactions from people who view the belle, in tropes, metaphors and exaggerations and/or the use of other rhetorical figures. I would argue that this tendency attains its apex in Sayat`-Nova's Armenian works. In the coming sections I will discuss this issue in more detail, while in Chapter 5 I will analyze the plausible literary sources for it in the elevate poetic traditions of the region.

Apart from formal, thematic, and narrower stylistic differences between *aşuġ* songs in Armenian and those in Turkic vernaculars, there seem to be genuine regional differences manifest in the forms of Tiflis Armenian *aşuġs'* Armenian songs as well. The first significant characteristic is their employment of the *muxammeẓ* genre and songs of five-line stanzas more frequently than any of their counterparts, either Armenian *aşuġs* outside Kartli, or Turkic *aşık/aşıq*s from the Caucasus, since this genre is rarely witnessed outside the works of Tiflis Armenian *aşuġs'* at all, while Sayat`-Nova, Şamč'i Melk'ō, and K'ič'ik'-Nova, the three major Tiflis Armenian *aşuġs* of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, all have works transmitted in this genre. The second is that they possess more songs with longer lines. The *muxammeẓ* genre itself, which constitutes a large proportion of Tiflis Armenian *aşuġs'* songs, normally requires 14-16 syllables per line. Similarly, several Tiflis Armenian *aşuġs'* quatrains also feature 14-16 syllable lines, while Armenian *aşuġs* from other regions prefer lines of 8 or 11 syllables (*semai* or *qoshma*). Sayat`-Nova appears quite late in the period under research, but is the earliest Tiflis Armenian *aşuġ* whose songs have come down to us. It appears that some aspects of the divergence can be attributed to the growing complexity of Armenian *aşuġ* literature over this period. However, later Isfahani Armenian *aşuġs* from

Amir Ōfli on, and Doni and Artem from South-Eastern Caucasus continued to use the semai and koshma forms with lines of 8 or 11 syllables more frequently.

## Section 2 General features of Sayat`-Nova's Armenian songs

Sayat`-Nova's Armenian songs are accepted as his most popular and artistically most acclaimed works. Until today most of the research literature also highlights this aspect of his output. In order to achieve a more synthetic understanding of his compositional creativity I will discuss several facets of his Azeri songs by way of comparison.

One major difference between Sayat`-Nova's Armenian songs and those in Georgian and Azeri is the existence of melodies to about 30 of his Armenians songs that were passed down orally until sound recording technology was brought to Tiflis. Indeed, they continue to be sung to this day. Levonyan mistakenly interpreted earlier discussions of the bard's musical ability to the effect that some of the melodies were pre-existing Persian tunes that the bard then adapted to his lyrics.<sup>4</sup> However, T'ahmizyan has convincingly shown that the bard's notes relate songs in the same mode (yang) but not the identical melody (eřanak).<sup>5</sup> Two further problems, however, still remain regarding these melodies and their transmission. The mere fact that these songs were still being sung decades after Sayat`-Nova's fall from favor and death is itself a

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<sup>4</sup> For the history of the collection and studies of these melodies, see Hasmik Injejikian, *Sayat Nova and Armenian Ashoogh musical tradition*, MA thesis, McGill University, Montreal, 1990, pp. 21-24. For the affirmative ideas, see for example, N. T'ahmizyan, "Sayat`-Novayi hayeren erkeri eřanakneri masin", *Teřekagir*, X (1963), pp. 35-58 and Baxĉ'inyan, 1988, p. 146.

<sup>5</sup> N. T'ahmizyan, "Sayat`-Novayi hayeren erkeri eřanakneri masin", *Teřekagir*, X (1963), pp. 35-58, as quoted from Injejikian, 1990, p. 23. See also Baxĉ'inyan, 1988, p. 146.

firm proof of their popularity. But since all ašuf rhythmic works are intended to be sung, why do none of his Georgian or Azeri songs survive? Other than the simplest explanation that Sayat`-Nova's Armenian songs are the artistically most accomplished of his trilingual corpus, is it possible to attribute the phenomenon at least partly to the difference in the accessibility of these songs. This relates to questions of the diverse audience for his songs, a topic I shall explore in more detail in a later section.

The next issue concerns the script Sayat`-Nova used for his Armenian songs in the Davt`ar.<sup>6</sup> There the bard used the Georgian script rather than Armenian to record the Armenian dialect of Tiflis, which would be his mother tongue, judging by his parents' origin. The Georgian script is not better accommodated to the phonetic system of Tiflis Armenian than its Armenian counterpart, since it lacks a character for schwa and the differentiation of two trills *r* and *ř*. In contrast, he uses the Armenian script to record Azeri songs, indicating his familiarity with that alphabet also. The pronunciation of the Tiflis dialect as reflected in Sayat`-Nova's transcription in Georgian script differs from classical Armenian and the traditional Armenian orthography based on the latter with regards to the surd/voiced or aspiration of explosive consonants, which often differ from each other.<sup>7</sup> If we assume that Sayat`-Nova possessed knowledge of classical Armenian and its orthography at that time, it would seem reasonable to assume further that this difference in pronunciation led the bard to adapt the Georgian script to clearly represent sounds in Tiflis Armenian in order to avoid the confusion likely to emerge

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<sup>6</sup> See also Chapter 3, section 3.

<sup>7</sup> For a brief reference to the phonetical peculiarities of the Tiflis dialect, see John Greppin and Amaria Khachaturian, *A handbook of Armenian dialectology*, Caravan Books, Delmar, NY, 1986, pp. 202-205.

from employing rather the Armenian script.

Now I shall review the four major literary aspects of Sayat`-Nova's Armenian songs. In the Davt`ar he used more genres in his Armenian songs than any other early modern Armenian ašul. For example, t`aslib,<sup>8</sup> uć`lama,<sup>9</sup> ɭaraheja<sup>10</sup> etc. are peculiar to him in the works of Armenian ašuls. Nevertheless, he records less genre names for his Armenian songs than those in Azeri. But this quantitative difference does not necessarily lead to any qualitative conclusion on his ability at adapting genres from Turkic to Armenian, several of which appear unique to him, not featuring in Armenian songs either before or after him. After all, the total number of his Armenian songs amounts to little more than half his Azeri works.

Both Levonyan and Baxć`inyan have already discussed the diversity and innovation of Sayat`-Nova's rhymes, and their arguments are predominantly based on Sayat`-Nova's Armenian works.<sup>11</sup> Yet it should be said that even though Sayat`-Nova uses more technically complex genres in his Azeri rather than his Armenian songs, this does not necessarily improve the former's overall quality as will be noted. Apart from the conclusions reached by Levonyan and Baxć`inyan, another striking difference between Sayat`-Nova and other sixteenth to eighteenth cc. Armenian ašuls (and most Turkic aşık/aşıqs from that period as well) is the former's use of prosodies with longer lines more often in his Armenian songs than his Georgian and even more frequently

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<sup>8</sup> Baxć`inyan's Armenian songs Nos. 6, 7, 22, 32, 35.

<sup>9</sup> Baxć`inyan's Armenian song No. 36.

<sup>10</sup> Baxć`inyan's Armenian song No. 53, from Ioane's manuscript.

<sup>11</sup> Levonyan's views have been listed in Chapter 3, as quoted from *Ašulnerě ev nranc` arvestě*, pp. 87-98. See Baxć`inyan, 1987, pp. 237-263.

than those in Azeri. As stated in chapter 3, the most popular genres for sixteenth to eighteenth century bards are the *semai* with 8 syllable lines and the *qoshma* with 11 syllable lines. But for Sayat`-Nova's Armenian songs in the two manuscripts the number of songs with 14-16 syllable lines accounts for 32 out of 55, with a percentage of 58.18%.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, if only the *Davt`ar* is taken into consideration, the result is 28 out of 47, 59.57%, while in Georgian it is 13 out of 34 (i.e. 38.24%) and Azeri only a meager 15 out of 117 (12.82%).<sup>13</sup> Longer lines allow for richer, more varied content, which might also have contributed to the greater success of Sayat`-Nova's Armenian songs.

A comparison of eulogies of the beloved by different *ašuls* in different meters may be the most revealing way to illustrate the contrast. Łul Yovhannēs has an extremely long eulogy of this kind commencing *Goveli hōsn u ĵamald* "Your praiseworthy beauty,"<sup>14</sup> in which he described the most facets of the belle's physical beauty ever to appear in Early Modern bardic songs, including reference to her fingers and nails. The song is written in the genre *bayat`i*, consisting of 7-syllable lines, while its stanzas unfold in this manner:

Patkerov huri as du,  
Kam malayik`, t`ē ĩlman as,  
P`aylum a loys eresd,  
Aregakan nman as du.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Here I add all songs with lines longer than 11 syllables, including composite forms. Sayat`-Nova is good at creating composite forms by juxtaposing stanzas with different lengths together. The Georgian and Azeri numbers are counted likewise.

<sup>13</sup> 15 out of 108 in the *Davt`ar*; no song with lines more than 11 syllables occurs in Ohan's manuscript.

<sup>14</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 167-169.

<sup>15</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, p. 167.

(In image, you are a houri,  
Or an angel, or ghilman,<sup>16</sup>  
Your face radiates light,  
You are sun-like.)

In contrast, Sayat`-Nova's 16-syllable line *lazali*<sup>17</sup> opens with the stanza:

Diba u engidunia, zarbab u zar is, goveli,  
Hëndu diaremen ēkac zar-łalamk`ar is, goveli,  
Šat sovdak`ar k`iz ku pëtre dun angin k`ar is, goveli,  
Antak covi mič`en hanac angin govhar is, goveli.

(You are brocade and “New World” cloth, gold-weave and gold,<sup>18</sup> Oh  
praiseworthy one,  
You are gold-painted cotton cloth coming from the land of India, Oh praiseworthy  
one,  
Many merchants are looking for you, you are a priceless [precious] stone, Oh  
praiseworthy one,  
You are a priceless pearl drawn from the bottomless sea, Oh praiseworthy one.)

Sayat`-Nova's first line contains four tropes, while the usual pattern for Łul  
Yovhannēs is only two. Later in the poem Sayat`-Nova tends not to cluster more tropes  
or images in one line, since he had allowed himself plenty of space to embellish each  
image with more details, thus rendering it more vivid and memorable.

Sayat`-Nova's Armenian songs parallel the thematic distribution of those in Azeri,  
the topics of love and religious/moral admonishment/allegory predominating. However,  
at 40 out of 55 in two manuscripts and 35 out of 47 in the Davt`ar, the proportion of

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<sup>16</sup> The reference is to the handsome young male servants in paradise according to the Qur'an.

<sup>17</sup> Baxč`inyan's Armenian song No. 4.

<sup>18</sup> This line up to this point is translated by Dowsett. See Dowsett, 1997, p. 9.

love songs in his Armenian corpus is even larger, while other secular topics are rather minimal.<sup>19</sup>

Yet apart from their proportional representation, the actual topics of Sayat`-Nova's other Armenian secular songs are also of some interest. His theme of petition to the ruler is unique among all sixteenth to eighteenth century bards. In addition, laments on one's own life form the topic of two of his secular compositions (Armenian songs Nos. 41 and 42), both of which are artistically elaborated. Of the two, the latter devoted to his instrument, the *kamancha*, is thematically more interesting as being unique in Sayat`-Nova's works, though it is not the only one of its kind in this period. At least Azeri *aşıq* Qurbani has one piece on his *saz* as well.<sup>20</sup> Though both are praise of the instrument, the latter is much shorter and obscure, as if abruptly cut short. This commonality suggests that composing lyric on their instruments was an accepted practice among sixteenth to eighteenth century bards.

We are probably justified in concluding that Sayat`-Nova left very few songs on purely secular social topics other than love, since the number of songs on those topics is more or less the same numerically in his Azeri songs, as in his Armenian and even Georgian songs as well (about 4-5). He has no composition on economic migrants (*panduxt*) nor any on places other than Armenian song No. 45 describing the church of St. George of Mułni, the occasion for which, according to Baxč`inyan, was the completion of the renovation of that church in Tiflis.<sup>21</sup> No songs exist concerning the

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<sup>19</sup> In fact, the proportion of love songs in Georgian might be even higher, about 25 out of 34.

<sup>20</sup> "Ağacdandır", *Qurbani*, Kazimov, 1990, p. 55, as in footnote 20, Chapter 3.

<sup>21</sup> Baxč`inyan, 1987, p. 460.



major events in his lifetime, and therefore the genre of dastan, or long narrative song, is completely absent from Sayat`-Nova's oeuvre. Of course not every sixteenth to eighteenth century bard possesses a dastan, or other songs on secular social topics other than love, including famous ones like Karacaoğlu and Qurbani. Furthermore, it should be said that lack of songs on secular topics other than love might not be considered as a drawback for sixteenth to eighteenth century bards, for this is rather the norm in that period. Beside Sayat`-Nova in his Armenian songs, Turkish aşık Karacaoğlu and Azerbaijani aşık Abbas Tufarğanlı deal mainly with love themes as well. In contrast, some minor Armenian aşuġs like Ĺul Arzuni and Abdin Őġli Hayrapet<sup>22</sup> lack any love songs at all.

From the perspective of language, Sayat`-Nova has long enjoyed a reputation for the richness of his vocabulary, in that he almost flooded his songs with Persian and Turkish words and phrases. But in fact, he shares this feature at least with the Isfahani Armenian aşuġs. I would argue that this fact should not be taken into consideration in isolation, but rather together with other aspects of his Armenian songs, primarily the handling of their themes and literary devices.

A noteworthy aspect of this relates to tropes based on concrete objects in use by all sixteenth to eighteenth century Armenian aşuġs where the material is referred to by its Persian or Turkic name more frequently than the Armenian equivalent. This is especially true of Sayat`-Nova, as reflected in the examples cited in this chapter, in

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<sup>22</sup> An eighteenth century New Julfan Armenian aşuġ, who lived c. 1760s-1800s. It appears that he spent part of his life travelling. See Aram Ereġmean, *Parġkahay aşuġner*, Tiflis, 1930, pp. 33-35.

which perhaps only *varť* (rose), *varť ařur* (rose water), *mark`arit* (pearl), *lusin* (moon) are Armenian nouns. Some of these items may have been known to them by their Persian and Turkic names alone, since their Armenian names may have circulated in a more elevated clerical circle. Though references to concrete objects are widespread in Sayat`-Nova's songs, abstract vocabulary is rare to find, as in other sixteenth to eighteenth century Armenian ařuls' works. That might suggest that his education was not necessarily more advanced than other ařuls, and that his foreign vocabulary was more probably acquired from daily life in Tiflis as an entrepot serving Europe (including Russia), the Ottoman Empire, and the Iranian sphere. In contrast, the rich variety of names and features for textiles in Sayat`-Nova's unique tropes (*řalamk`ari*, *diba*, *atlas*, etc.) has led many scholars to propose that his second career may have been related to textiles, as a dyer or weaver.<sup>23</sup>

Section 3 The literary merits of Sayat`-Nova's Armenian songs in comparison with his own Azeri songs and those of other Early Modern Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Turkish bards

My goal in this section is to obtain a clearer understanding of the status of Sayat`-Nova's corpus of Armenian songs within the context of the contemporary bardic genre. Although scholars have given various appraisals of his status, those have often been based purely on readings of his Armenian poems or on general impressions from wider

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<sup>23</sup> For the traditions about his career as a weaver, see Baxř`inyan, 1988, pp. 42-44 and, for his two possible careers, Dowsett, pp. 8-10, 219, 231.

reading not anchored in a more systematic study of the subject. At the same time, I should mention that the comparison I am conducting involves only love songs, since this category boasts the largest pool of bardic works overall as also in the case of Sayat`-Nova. Moreover, it is precisely the bard's love songs that have provoked most discussion and are broadly considered the most artistically successful aspect of his output.

All scholars agree on Sayat`-Nova's singular excellence among all early modern Armenian *aşuflar*, as reflected in his careful choice of words, appropriate in both their sound and meaning, fluent sentence construction and stanza continuity, affective, ardent, noble, and innovative, almost singular renderings of unrequited love, and vivid and subtle images and tropes, which are found less even in the same author's Azeri songs. In the following sections, I shall develop the discussion concerning the norms of expression, rhetoric, display of emotion, and aesthetic standards exhibited in Sayat`-Nova's songs to offer a comprehensive evaluation of his bardic skill.<sup>24</sup>

In Chapter 3 section3, I attempted a classification of the themes and forms of sixteenth to eighteenth century bardic love songs. Significantly, Sayat`-Nova practised every theme and sub-theme and employed every form listed there. Perhaps partly due to the vagaries of transmission, not every sixteenth to eighteenth century bard can boast the same profile. Thus, some Isfahani Armenian *aşuflar* have no love song passed down to us, as is also understandably true for some Turkish military *aşiks*. At the same time,

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<sup>24</sup> Certain aspects of Sayat`-Nova's output have been excluded from discussion since they have been adequately dealt with by previous scholars. For the section on the image of alien and distant countries, see Baxč`inyan, 1988, p. 196, and, for some innovative tropes, pp. 196-206.

it is clear that in most of his love songs Sayat`-Nova follows the conventions of the well-tested composite structure of sixteenth to eighteenth century bards, first praising the beloved (in most cases for her physical beauty), then expressing the bard's passion for her, often with lamentation on the suffering he bears from this love, in most cases the separation of the two, which is in turn mostly caused by the belle's own mercilessness not to reward the bard by returning his affection, and at the end of the song, more often than not, he entreats his love's leniency to requite his love, which in most cases implies a reunion.

To illustrate these features I will compare bardic songs written in this structure from different phases of the Early Modern period. Since the songs combining two or more tropes permit the inclusion of more topics, this type is artistically higher and more appealing than those featuring only one. This category is first attested in Qurbani's songs dating to the sixteenth century, though it was not very common at that time. From Qurbani's collection (1990) perhaps only four qoşmas combine the first two themes.<sup>25</sup> Here the quotation is a four-stanza song, longer than the average three-stanza examples, and hence able to express more:

Ey şəmi-pərvanə, Salatın pəri,  
Sənin hüsnün kimi mahtab olmaz.  
Didarına sənün müştəq olanın,  
Bidar olur, gözlərində xab olmaz.

Bir qula ki, haqdan qəzəb olmasa,  
Gorda bir meyyitə əzab olmasa,  
Aralıqda şeytan, gəzzab olmasa,

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<sup>25</sup> "Olmaz", p. 62; "İstərəm", p. 65; "Gətiri", p. 81; "Gəzə-gəzə mən", p. 85.

Dünya bərhəm yeyüb, heç xarab olmaz.

Ey qaşları Kaman, kiprikləri ox,  
Gözləri hərami, qəmzələri şux,  
Gözəl adam, səni sevdim dəxi çox,  
Könül versə hamı, kimsə bab olmaz.

Qurbani der, “Səndə çoxdur nəzərim,  
Burqədə yazıla sən mənim yarım,  
Ta sən sağ ol, tuti dilli nigarım,  
Mən ölsəm, bu aləm heç xarab olmaz.”<sup>26</sup>

(Hey, candle and moth, peri Salatın,  
There is no moonlight like your beauty.  
To admirers of your eyes  
There is wakefulness. In his eyes there is no sleep.

To a slave, if there is no rage from God,  
To a dead man in the grave, if there is no misery,  
The internal Satan, if it is not lying,  
The world is devouring (all of them) recklessly, there is no devastation.

Hey, her eyebrows are bows, eyelashes arrows,  
Her eyes marauders, her coquetry flirty,  
Beautiful person, I loved you even more,  
If the heart gives all, someone would be peerless.

Qurbani says, “You have much of my glance,  
May it be written on the burqa, that you are my love,  
As long as you are well, parrot-tongued belle,  
If I die, this universe cannot be harmed.”)

The song expresses praise of the beloved's physical beauty and the aşiq's admiration for her. The second stanza seems like a combination of proverbs, which is not usual in Early Modern bardic songs, even for Qurbani.<sup>27</sup> However, most of the

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<sup>26</sup> Qurbani, Kazımov, 1990, p. 62.

<sup>27</sup> Indeed, the frequency of proverbs and sayings in Sayat'-Nova's works is higher than most Early Modern bards. For examples, see Baxç'inyan, 1988, pp. 147-187, and Aram Łanalanyan, *Sayat'-Novayi stelcagorcut'yan žofovrđakan afbyurnerě*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakčut'yun, Yerevan, 1963.

limited description of her physical beauty is concentrated in stanza three. Moreover, the tropes or hyperboles like the candle and moth, eyebrows like bows, and eyelashes like arrows are a staple of both Early Modern bardic songs and elevated poetry, though the marauder-like eyes might be an innovation.

The famous eighteenth century Azeri aşiq Xəstə Qasım, who lived roughly 200 years after Qurbani, left around 50 love songs, less than half his collection.<sup>28</sup> About 15 of them are in three stanzas, while a roughly equal number contain more than four stanzas. Though several of the longer works do not necessarily combine both themes, I have selected a song for comparison that affords both a combination of themes and longer volume:

Qəriblikdə mənə həmdən olan yar,  
Bir bəri gəl, ayaqların qurbanı.  
Şikəstə könlümə məlhəm olan yar,  
Danış, dilin, dodaqların qurbanı.

O nə mudur? O nə xaldır? Nə bərdir?  
Zülflərin əbrişəm, tellərin zərdir,  
Noğul deyil, nabat deyil, şəkərdir,  
Sal ağzıma dodaqların qurbanı.

Könlüm istər yara qurban olmağa,  
Dolanıb başına heyran olmağa,  
Ala gözlü yara mehman olmağa,  
Fərş döşənmiş otaqların qurbanı.

Məclislərin zibasısan zeyisən,  
Söhbətişən, məzəsisən, meyişən,  
Oxuyusan əlif, beyi, teyi sən,  
Çevir dərsin varaqların qurbanı.

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<sup>28</sup> See Hüseyn İsmayılov et al., *Xəstə Qasim*, Nurlan, Baku, 2010.

Xəstə Qasım, sən yolunda azarsan,  
Məcnun kimi səhraları gəzərsən,  
Ala gözlü yara namə yazarsan,  
Qələmdanın, barmaqların qurbanı.<sup>29</sup>

(Darling who become my sincere companion In wandering,  
Come here, victim of feet,  
Darling, who become balm to my broken heart,  
Speak, victim of tongue and lips.

What hair is that? What mole is that? What bosom is it?  
Your hairlocks are silk, your forelocks are gold,  
Not nugget, not lollipop, but sugar,  
Put in my mouth, victim of lips.

My heart wants (me) to be sacrificed for the belle,  
To adore her turning head,  
To be the guest of the grey-eyed darling,  
Victim of the rooms paved with carpets.

In feasts you are the beauty, you are the life,  
You are the stock for talk, the appetizer, the wine.  
You are the reading, the Alif, Be, Te,<sup>30</sup>  
Turn, victim of the class notes.

Xəstə Qasım, if you get lost on the way.  
If you wander in the deserts like Majnun.  
If you write a letter to the grey-eyed darling,  
Victim of the pencase, of the fingers.)

In this later work, the description of the darling's physical beauty is not much more detailed than the previous about two hundred years earlier, and the frequency of tropes is not higher either. Still, the praise of the belle extends to two stanzas (two and four), her physical beauty is described in more detail (not merely her hair per se, but also hairlocks and forelocks), the self-identification as "slave" to various objects is less

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<sup>29</sup> İsmayılov, 2010, pp. 69-70.

<sup>30</sup> The first three letters of the Arabic alphabet.

normal, with more images like wandering and a feast, and even an allusion to Majnun presented.

While we might conclude that innovation in Azerbaijani aşiq love songs composed with combined themes is not very developed in the Early Modern period, in the Ottoman sphere, even the combined structure is hard to document from those three centuries, at least on the basis of Fuad Köprülü's five-part collection. Only in the works of the eighteenth century Ottoman Armenian aşul Xritar is one muxammezz to be found that represents both praise and yearning (in this case even reproach), as reproduced below:

Aptal ēt`tēn pēni xuplar sult`ani,  
Čanēmēn čēnani sēnmisēn tilpar,  
Rahm ēylē ear, rahm ēylērsē ear,  
Šaz ōlur pu čan, pēn ničē tir eanam,  
Ōlti čana k`ear, kēōniwl č`ēk`ēr zar, šōl lēppi siwk`k`ear.

Siwk`k`ear lēpēn paltēr, tišlērin lalatēr,  
Eanaxtak`i xaltēr, ēōp`sēm vēpaltēr,  
Ōl gamēt`ēn taltēr, kēytikēn altēr,  
Ġōynēn ič`i kiwltēr, ōlmiš palč`ē par,  
Pēk`lēr avčēlar, ōnta kiwman var, lōxar ayva, nar.

Narēn palč`asēnta kirēytim gana,  
Łul ōlaytim sana, hēy sēvkili suna,  
Eazarēm sult`ana, zulm ēylēr sana,  
Kēl sēvtikim pana, vēr sēn pir ixrar,  
Ġylēmēm ink`ear, uyarsan ēkēr, fēta lēlim sēr.

Sērim lēlam fēta, ōl earē kitē,  
Łōrqam sērxōš ōla ič`inčēz patē,  
Pusa vērtēn eatē, kēōrtim t`ēnhatē,  
Ōlur mē xanētē, eōx mē namus ar,



Ēriti titar, ħulun Xritar, č`alěrěr sēt`t`ar.<sup>31</sup>

(You turned me mad, magnificent lady,  
You are the true love of my soul, love,  
Show mercy, love, if you are merciful,  
My soul would be pleasant; I have been burning for a long time.  
Life is extinguished, the heart is in pai for the sugar-lipped one.

Her sugar lip is honey, her teeth are rubies,  
The mole on her cheek, if I kiss, it is a crime.  
Her stature is a bough, her dress is crimson,  
There is a rose in her bosom, like fruit in a garden,  
Lords and hunters have doubt about her, the pomegranate tht smells of quince.

The pomegranate in the garden made me shed blood,  
I became your slave, hey dear turtledove!  
I shall write to the Sultan to let him/her torture you,  
Come to me, my love, give a confession!  
I would not refuse, if you comply, I would sacrifice my life.

I shall sacrifice my life, but the belle is going away.  
I fear that she will get drunk when she drinks wine.  
She gave a kiss to a stranger, I saw it beside myself.  
Would she get home? Or seek shame?  
Your slave Xritar, eyes melted, cries for mercy.)

It is unfortunate that since biographical information on Xritar is so meagre, it is almost impossible to discover where in the Ottoman Empire he lived and whether the combination of themes in his composition, unique in the Ottoman sphere, depended on any Azerbaijani influence. The plot of the song is interesting and unique in early modern bardic literature, since it portrays the beloved's betrayal at the end, contrary to the bard's conventional situation of merely crying for a reunion. However, the description of the beloved's physical beauty and the tropes are still conventional.

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<sup>31</sup> For the Armeno-Turkish text, see Amirean, 1989, p. 56 and, for the Armenian translation, p. 57. Much of the English rendering is based on the Armenian translation.

Let us now examine the situation in bardic songs in Armenian. There the combined structure appeared in some songs by Լուի Էգազ, the first *aṣuṭ* whose works have come down to us in Armenian, who flourished in the second half of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century:

Es k`ez veray hēnc` karōt em,  
Zor carawn axbri veray,  
K`oy sērn inji ērēl ay,  
Zor ĵurn aces kri veray.

Anuš hotēd buṛ buṛ ku gay,  
Es dušman č`em, č`um cuṛ ku gay,  
Cicēt coc`umt šuṛ ku gay,  
Zor ĵknern ĵri veray.

Lizut beranumt baṛ ku tay,  
Ač`kt yeresit t`aṛ ktay,  
Xaln ēresit xaw ktay,  
Inč` ĵuarn t`ri veray.

Ov or earin kasi vasn day,  
Amenayn dardē azat ay,  
Eari šalavat`n šat ay,  
Buxtn ktay ĵri veray.

Լուի Էգազն k`ez inč` arar,  
Šilac`uc`ir xelk`n tarar,  
Լուի ku grvem k`ez muṭarar,  
Anumt patmir gri veray.<sup>32</sup>

(I am just longing for you,  
Thirsty for news about you.  
Your love burned me,  
As you pour water on lime.

Your sweet smell comes in waves,  
I am not an enemy, why does it waft round me?

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<sup>32</sup> No. 5, Sahakyan, 1961, p. 76.

Your nipples move in your bosom,  
Like fish in water.

Your tongue in your mouth gives a word,  
Your eyes stare at your face,  
The mole lies on your face,  
Like a jewel on a sword.

Whoever tells the darling about it,  
Is free from all sorts of pains,  
The belle's generosity is abundant,  
Defamation she will give to water (to carry away).

What did Łul Ēgaz do to you?  
You paralyzed his brain.  
I, the Slave<sup>33</sup>, am incessantly inscribed for you as a slave,  
Tell your name in writing!)

So far the frequency of tropes in bardic songs in both Turkic and Armenian is one or two per line on average. It is more normal that they occur in the middle stanzas, rather than the first or last, but this convention is broken in Łul Yovhannēs' song above. There is one trope in every last line of the first four stanzas, which represents the only trope in the whole stanza, so that the overall quantity of tropes in this song parallels previous examples. Nevertheless, the four tropes are all quite unique in quality, thus constituting the most impressive aspect of the song, which is conventional in other respects. This emerges especially in comparison with later songs, for example, the one by Łul Yovhannēs below:

Ear, k`o tesoyñ grft`ar am, earab dardis darman kanes,  
Mayil am sirun hōsnud, mah ĵamalid hēyran kanes,  
Du huri as, t`ē ēnsan as, hař dam mēk nřan kanes,

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<sup>33</sup> I.e., *lul*.

T`agawor as u kayser as, veray taftin nšan kanes,  
Vařvum as mařali pēs, č`ok` kołmd įraľuan kanes.

Eresd čařagayt` a, mist p`aylum as du muľarar,  
Zōreľ as hrařapēs, lusawores t`amam ařxarh,  
Ařawōtean blbli pēs k`zart`nes dam sahar,  
K`aľc`rik jēnēd ľunľunalov č`ač`ay ktas mist andadar,  
Anmahakan baľi mējn vart`i verēn sēhřan kanes.

Du mēk t`ařlan řahunbaľ as, otumd kay gulabat`n,  
Sim oskeay, įavahirov marjan č`arac hamematn,  
Inč`ōřinakov saľmanac, zardarac a k`o surat`n,  
Ov ok`tesni, erani tay Astcu tuac amanat`n,  
Du iřxan as t`řč`noc`, k`ez t`awusi nman kanes.

Arewelic` minč` arewmut es um berem vasmēd ani?  
T`ay č`unes hoľelinum, aržani as huri ľlmani.  
Eōt`anasun erku azgēn minn č`kay k`ez nmani,  
Aregak u ľusniakn, t`ē ěndonk` lini k`ez ěntani,  
K`ez tuac a hosn ařxarhi, ēl inč`bani guman kanes.

Ari, asa, ľul Yovhannēs, onc`kuřšanas k`o earic`n?  
Č`em uzum ač`k`s xp`em mēk sahat`k`o didaric`n,  
K`ez em uzum, mit`ē ayloc`jer am k`ařel ařxarhic`n,  
Mēk ōř am k`ez xōsk`n tuēľ, yet č`em daľnal iľřaric`n,  
Ēs asel am, įan as, k`ezi hmar įans ľurban kanem.<sup>34</sup>

(Darling, I am the captive of your good looks. Would that you would heal my pain.  
I prefer your lovely beauty, your moon-like beauty causes admiration.  
Are you a houri or a human, you appear every moment,  
You are a king, and you are a Caesar, you appear on the throne,  
You are burning like a torch, you illumine the four directions around you.

Your face is a beam, you are always shining, incessantly,  
You are wonderfully powerful, you illuminate the whole world,  
Like a morning nightingale, you wake the dew at dawn,  
From your sweet voice you incessantly bring forward “chacha” by a gale,  
From the top of the rose in the immortal garden you circle.

You are a falcon in the royal garden, at your feet are rose thickets,  
Golden, silver, coral with jewel are incomparable,  
On what model is your face fashioned and decorated?

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<sup>34</sup> No. 5, Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 165-166.

Whoever sees it gives bliss to God-given trust,  
You are the prince of birds. You are peacock-like.

From East to West, whom should I bring to praise you?  
You have no peer among the earthly, you are worthy of a houri's slavery,  
There is not a single one similar to you among the seventy-two races,  
Sun and moon, they are your familiars.  
The beauty of the world is given to you, why should you doubt?

"Come!" I said, John the slave<sup>35</sup>, how could you have enough of your darling?  
I do not want to blink my eyes one moment from looking at you,  
I want you, have I pulled others by the hand from the world?  
I gave you my word one day, after that I have not turned away from my pledge.  
I told you this, you are my life, for you I would sacrifice my life.)

In this muxammaz, or song made up of five-line stanzas, the praise of the belle permeates the first four stanzas, with tropes in each, more detailed and more vivid. Those tropes like the one on the torch or the falcon in the royal garden are quite unique. The one on the nightingale is thematically conventional, but incorporates much more detail, rendering the image unique and impressive. In general, the emotional content of this song represents much more verve and vivacity than previous examples.

Let us now consider one of Sayat'-Nova's Azeri songs in comparison:

Dery[a]dan č`ëxup`san, xob inji-marjan,  
Łimet`[l]u javahir lal arasinda,  
Yar, dilun šak`ardur, dëhanun šuša,  
Lablarun badamdur, bal arasinda.

Gal gozal, rahm ëyla, łanumi girma,  
Dišlarun inji t`ak` duzulmiš širma,  
Sač`larun šarbabi, zilp`larun sirma,  
Jamalun łamardur xal arasinda.

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<sup>35</sup> The meaning of Łul Yovhannës.

Yavri k`ak`lig k`imi dała sak`ilmiš,  
Łoyni bałdur, šir šamamdan ak`ilmiš,  
Ėla bildum, hadidadan č`ak`ilmiš,  
Inja belin t`irman šal arasinda.

Zar p`rangi šah baĵindan lač`ilmiš,  
Banovšasan behest bałda sač`ilmiš,  
Alagozlar gul-łonč`adan ač`ilmiš,  
Ĵıla laš boyanmiš sal arasinda.

Ėšx ustina varup`, birdan almišam,  
Bałrumi dalup`dur, t`irdan almišam,  
Sayat`-Novam, diar p`irdan almišam,  
But`am, san č`ėxup`san p`al almišam.<sup>36</sup>

(From the sea you have taken fine pearls and coral,  
Their worth among those of jewels and rubies,  
Beloved, your tongue is sugar, your mouth a cup,  
Your lips are almonds coated with honey.

Come, beautiful one, have mercy, do not enter my blood,  
Your teeth are like pearls set in ivory,  
Your hair is satin, your [hair]locks are silk,  
Your beauty is (that of) the moon (with) a mole on it.

Like a baby partridge you staggered to the mountain,  
Your bosom is a garden, [where] milk dripped from melon,  
I thought that your slim waist was dragged from the anvil,  
[It] is in the precious handmade shawl.

The Frankish gold was spared from the shah's tax,  
You are a violet, chosen in the garden of paradise,  
Your grey eyes are revealed from rosebuds,  
Your corona-like eyebrows are in the middle of painted slabs.

Coming upon love, all of a sudden I took one,  
My liver is burning, I took it from an arrow.  
I am Sayat`-Nova who says, "I took it from a sage,"  
My idol, you emerge [when] I took auguries.)

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<sup>36</sup> Az. No. 71, Baxč`inyan, 1987, pp. 244-247. Dowsett has included the transcription of its first two stanzas and an English translation in his monograph, for which, see Dowsett, 1997, pp. 278-279. I have quoted it here. Words in parentheses are his addition, while those in square brackets are mine.

Here, the average frequency of tropes in the first four stanzas is more than one per line, since though very few lines (e.g. the first line in the second stanza and the last line in the third) that lack tropes, most of the other lines including more than one. Moreover, many tropes do not occur separately, but appear together to build a more complete image, like those relating to the beloved's tongue, mouth, and lip in the first stanza. Consequently, those composite images are even more appealing. The tropes and images here, like those on the baby partridge, the bosom (milk dripping from a melon), and eyebrows ("in the middle of dyed slabs") are already very innovative and impressive.

Let us now compare one of his representative Armenian songs:

Ašxarumēs ax č`im k`aši, k`ani vur jan is inj ama.  
 Anmahakan jērov lik`ēn, ōske p`ēnjan is inj ama,  
 Nēstim, vēres šēvak` anis zarbab vēran is inj ama,  
 Suč`s imac`i, ēnenc` spane sult`an u xan is inj ama.

Meč`kēt salbu-č`inari pes, rangēt P`ērangi atlas ē,  
 Lizut šak`ar, pērošet land, akrek`ēt mark`rit, almas ē,  
 Ōsku meč`ēn mina arac, ač`kirēt, aknakap t`as ē,  
 Patvakan angin javahir, lal-Badešxan is inj ama.

Yis ēs dardin vunc` dimanam? Makam sirtēs unim k`arac,  
 Artasunk`s arun šinec`ir, xilk`ēn gēlxes unim tarac,  
 Nur bał is, nur bałč`i meč`ēn bolork`ēt vart`ov č`ap`arac,  
 Vēret šur gam bělbuli pes sirov seyran is inj ama.

K`u ēšxēn inji mast arav, yis zart`un im, sirts ē k`nac,  
 Ašxars ašxarov kēštac`av, im sirtēs k`iznic` sov mēnac`,  
 Yar, k`iz inč`ov t`arip` anim? Ašxarumēs ban č`ēmēnac`,  
 Krake covemen dus ēkac, raš u jeyran is inj ama.

Inč` kuli mek hides xosis, t`evur Sayat`-Novu yar is,  
 Šulkēt ašxarēs bērnīl ē aregagi demēn p`ar is.  
 Hutov hil, mixak, dark`in, vart`, manušak, susanbar is,

Karmëragun dašti calik, hotvac` šušan is inj ama.<sup>37</sup>

Dowsett's literal translation<sup>38</sup>:

In this world I shall sigh no sigh, since you are life-and-soul for me,  
Filled with immortal water, You are a golden cup for me.  
When I visit, you give me shade: you are a silken tent for me,  
If you understand me to sin, slay me for it: you are Sultan and Khan for me.

Your figure is like the poplar and the cypress, your complexion is like European satin,  
Your tongue is sugar, your lips are candy, your teeth pearls and diamonds,  
Like blue-beads set in gold, your eyes are a begemmed cup,  
Precious, priceless jewel, you are a Badeshkhan<sup>39</sup> ruby for me.

How can I withstand this torment, when my heart is pelted so with stones?  
You have turned my tears to blood, reason is taken from my head,  
You are a new(ly planted) garden, the middle plot of which is measured round by rose,  
Over you like a nightingale would I wander: you are a vision of Love for me.

Love for you has made me drunk: I am awake, but my heart is numb,  
This world is crammed with people, but my heart is starved of you,  
Beloved, with what shall I praise you, in my world nothing remains (that I could use as  
a fitting image),  
Risen from a sea of fire, you are Râsh<sup>40</sup> and a gazelle for me.

How would it be if you spoke to me, saying you are Sayat`-Nova's beloved?  
Your splendor has enveloped the world, your glory vies with the sun,  
Fragrant cardamom, cloves, cinnamon, rose, violet, water-mint,  
Crimson blossom of the plain, you are the shepherd's lily<sup>41</sup> for me.

In this Armenian song the frequency of tropes might not be as high as its Azeri counterpart, but the innovativeness (a golden cup filled with the water of immortality,

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<sup>37</sup> For the text, see Arm. No. 16, Baxč`inyan, 1987, p. 31.

<sup>38</sup> Dowsett, 1997, pp. 263-264.

<sup>39</sup> Dowsett always kept the Armenian form rather than *Badakhshan* in English.

<sup>40</sup> "Rustam's steed"—Dowsett. Rustam is one of the most brilliant heroes in the Shahnameh, the Iranian epic.

<sup>41</sup> Here Dowsett made a mistake. *Hovtac` šušan* should be "Lily of the valley".



a shade-giving silken tent) and the vividness of the images (eyes like blue beads set in gold, a steed and gazelle risen from a sea of fire), and the ardor of the passion (“If you understand me to sin, slay me for it: you are sultan and khan for me;” “This world is crammed with people, but my heart is starved of you”), surpass not only the previous example, but all the previous songs. Sayat`-Nova also combined more “exotic flavor” (satin of West European origin (“Frankish” in the original) united with a ruby from Badakhshan) and allusion (Rakhsh, the steed of Rustam in *Shahnameh*; and the Lily of the valley from the biblical book *Song of Songs*) in this song, thus adding to its impressive qualities.

Though the plot structure does not differ much from those of other bards, as a combination of all major the sub-themes in bardic love songs, this structure would be the most impressive and moving for the audience. After the combined formulae for the sub-genre *giizelleme*, the bard has few works of pure praise of the beloved’s physical beauty, or *şikayətnamə* and pure lament on unrequited love in the strict sense.

It also appears that Sayat`-Nova innovated in the structure of two other common types of sixteenth to eighteenth century bardic love songs. The first relates to the dialogue between lovers, which features in Armenian song No. 17 composed purely in the voice of the *ašuf*’s love, and the preceding, which comprises a more extended discussion between the lovers. The second type refers to songs featuring the rose and nightingale motif, which is not found very often in sixteenth to eighteenth century Armenian *ašufs*’ works.<sup>42</sup> In contrast, Sayat`-Nova not only makes frequent allusion to

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<sup>42</sup> Šamč`i-Melk`o possesses two songs on the motif of the rose and nightingale.

the motif in his songs, but composes Armenian song No. 7 in the form of a dialogue between the nightingale and the *aşuġ*, rather than the standard third person narration of a dialogue between the nightingale and the rose, or other flowers/birds in the garden. This innovation is unparalleled in the oeuvre of other sixteenth to eighteenth century bards.

Now let us turn to the **rhetorical** aspects of Sayat`-Nova's songs. Our listing of the major rhetorical figures employed in Early Modern bardic compositions at the beginning of chapter 3 helped verify the conclusion that Sayat`-Nova utilized the complete range, a profile unmatched by many of his counterparts. Building on that foundation, let us explore the tropes Sayat`-Nova applied to portray the beloved's beauty. For Sayat`-Nova's readers perhaps it is precisely his tropes that would initially captivate them. As scholars have concluded, tropes on jewels, other precious stones and precious metals, textiles, flowers, spices, and perfumes, fragrant herbs etc. are very popular in Sayat`-Nova's Armenian songs, while tropes on animals, trees, and stars are also found. These images encompass all the senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch) to some degree, a finding that, however, also holds true for other bards of Sayat`-Nova's caliber in representing most of the above categories, thus necessitating a more in-depth examination of the standard range. By way of preface, one should note that Sayat`-Nova possesses a number of unique examples unparalleled in the oeuvre of other bards, e.g. comparing the beloved to musical instruments like the *santur*, *kamancha*,

chang,<sup>43</sup> or to writing implements,<sup>44</sup> or the comparison of the beloved's fingers to candles.<sup>45</sup>

Tropes frequently occurring in Sayat'-Nova's Armenian songs:

A. jewels, other precious stones and precious metals:

Yis k'u fimet'ën č'im gidi  
javahir k'ari něman is.<sup>46</sup>

(I do not know your value,  
You are like [a] precious stone.)

Akrek'ët yafut'-almas ē.<sup>47</sup>

(Your teeth are rubies and diamonds)

.....akrek'ët mark'rit, almas ē,  
Ōsku meč'ën mina arac, ač'kirēt, aknap t'as ē,  
Patvakan angin javahir, lal-Badešxan is inj ama.<sup>48</sup>

(..... your teeth are pearls and diamonds,  
[Like] enameled [beads] in gold, your eyes are a jewel-embedded cup.  
You are a precious priceless gem, Badakhshan ruby for me.)

Mark'aritov lik'ën kal is, sadap'nirēt t'ura-t'ura,  
Ėrcat'e koxpek'ov koxpac, dun, ōske řaza is, aziz.<sup>49</sup>

(You are a stand full of pearls, all sorts of mother-of-pearl,  
You are a golden bolt, locked with a silver lock, dear.)

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<sup>43</sup> Arm. No. 3, lines 56-57. Such tropes are not found in his Azeri songs, but those in Georgian, on which, see Baxč'inyan, 1988, p. 196.

<sup>44</sup> For example, the collection of lives of saints, or *Aysmavurk'* in Armenian: Arm. No. 8, line 20; Arm. No. 27, line 3: Baxč'inyan, 1988, p. 197.

<sup>45</sup> Arm. No. 23, line 12; Arm. No. 47, line 29. See Baxč'inyan, 1988, pp. 202-203.

<sup>46</sup> Arm. No. 6, lines 1-2. For Dowsett's transliteration and translation, see Dowsett, 1997, p. 280.

<sup>47</sup> Arm. No. 6, line 10.

<sup>48</sup> Arm. No. 16, lines 6-8. For Dowsett's transliteration, literal translation and artistic translation (transplanting the original rhyme scheme), see Dowsett, 1997, pp. 263-264.

<sup>49</sup> Arm. No. 39, lines 7-8. For Dowsett's transliteration and translation, see Dowsett, 1997, pp. 155-157.

B. textiles:

Řangět P`ěřangi atlas ē,  
Zar-Ialamk`ari něman is<sup>50</sup>.

(Your luster is that of European satin,  
You are like gold-painted cotton cloth.)

Me birēs P`ěřangi atlas ē, talis ē šovĭ u šap`aġat`<sup>51</sup>

(It is a load of European satin, shining and gleaning.)

C. flowers<sup>52</sup>:

Cuc`it meč`ěn vart`, manišak, sěmbul u susan is šini,  
K`u terěn baġen inč` kone? K`u hutěn řehan is šini.<sup>53</sup>

(You have grown rose, violet, hyacinth and lily between your breasts,  
What will your master do with the garden? You have made your scent like basil.)

D. fragrant herbs, spices and perfumes:

Me birěn ĺěrměz u zap`rang, me birěn ēġ zanġap`il a,  
Me k`ani birēs darič`in, me birěn ē ĺaranp`il a.<sup>54</sup>

(A load of red [dyer] and saffron, also a load of ginger;  
A few loads of cinnamon, also a load of clove.)

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<sup>50</sup> Arm. No. 6, lines 11-12.

<sup>51</sup> Arm. No. 10, lines 11-12.

<sup>52</sup> Phrases including *vart`gul* “rose” or *baġ/bağ* “garden” are already such clichés in Sayat`-Nova’s corpus that I decided not to quote single occurrences here.

<sup>53</sup> Arm. No. 31, lines 13-14. The translation is partially based on Dowsett’s paraphrase, for which, see Dowsett, 1997, p. 387.

<sup>54</sup> Arm. No. 10, lines 16-17.

Vart`ajërov t`ac` is ëli.<sup>55</sup>

(You are moistened with rose water.)

Hutët ašxarët bërnîl ë, bernumt unis zanĵap`ilën,  
Kanc` k`iz lav hut č`i unena Hëndu ëkac ĩaranp`ilën.<sup>56</sup>

(Your scent has caught your world; you have ginger in your mouth.  
Even cloves from India do not have scent better than yours.)

E. animals<sup>57</sup>:

Krake, covemen dus ëkac, řaš u ĵeyran is inj ama.<sup>58</sup>

(You are a Rakhsh and antelope that has emerged from fire, from the sea, for me.)

Yip` nëštum is t`ut`i luš is, yip` kangnum is řaš, nazani.<sup>59</sup>

(When you sit, you are parrot, when you stand, you are Rakhsh, O graceful one!)

F. fruits and desserts:

Pëřošnirët nabat` unis,  
Łand u šak`ari nëman is.<sup>60</sup>

(Your lips have rock candy,  
You are like sugar and candy.)

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<sup>55</sup> Arm. No. 22, line 3.

<sup>56</sup> Arm. No. 38, lines 5-6.

<sup>57</sup> Likewise, the single occurrence of bëlbul/bulbul is omitted here.

<sup>58</sup> Arm. No. 16, line 16. This is my own translation.

<sup>59</sup> Arm. No. 26, line 16.

<sup>60</sup> Arm. No. 6, lines 7-8.

Ēndu hama carav mart`ën k`u jëremen č`i kěštana,  
Širazu šušumën acac nabat`e šarbat`ën dun is.<sup>61</sup>

(For this thirsty person cannot be satiated by your water,  
You are syrup with rock candy in Shiraz glass.)

Xoskirët k`alc`r, k`alc`r ē, lizut šak`ar u nabat` ē,  
Xëmolin vēnas č`i ani, jerit bërnacën šarbat` ē.<sup>62</sup>

(Your words are sweet, sweet, your tongue is sugar and rock candy,  
It will bring the drinker no harm, what your hand holds is syrup.)

G. stars:

Ēresët ē šamš u łamar.<sup>63</sup>

(Your face is sun and moon.)

Ēresët nur lusni něman k`ani keha, ku bolërvı.<sup>64</sup>

(Your face is like moonlight, whenever it appears, it radiates.)

H. trees<sup>65</sup>:

Meč`kët salbu-č`inari pes, ...<sup>66</sup>

(Your back is like a cypress, a plane tree.)

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<sup>61</sup> Arm. No. 28, lines 15-16.

<sup>62</sup> Arm. No. 30, lines 13-14.

<sup>63</sup> Arm. No. 22, line 16.

<sup>64</sup> Arm. No. 31, line 5.

<sup>65</sup> Generally speaking, this category is very rare in Sayat`-Nova's works.

<sup>66</sup> Arm. No. 16, line 5. This is my own translation.

Sayat`-Nova's Azeri songs:

A. jewels, other precious stones and precious metals:

Dery[a]dan č`ëxup`san, xob inji-marjan,  
Łimet`[l]u řavahir lal arasinda.<sup>67</sup>

(From the sea you have taken fine pearls and coral,  
Their worth [is] among that of jewels and rubies,)

Gel! Ač`ginan malun, řavahir-zurmaxt.<sup>68</sup>

(Come! Reveal your wealth, jewel-emerald.)

B. textiles:

Łalami hëndisan nařsun bulanmaz.<sup>69</sup>

(You are Indian painted cotton cloth, your pattern is unique.)

C. flowers:

Běhar yasamanisan, yarp`aľun xuni.  
Daľda banovřasan, baľč`ada nargiz.<sup>70</sup>

(You are the lilac of spring, your leaves (are) blood red.  
You are the violet on the mountain, narcissus in the garden.)

D. fragrant herbs, spices and perfumes:

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<sup>67</sup> Az. No. 71, lines 1-2. For Dowsett's translation, see Dowsett, 1997, p. 279.

<sup>68</sup> Az. No. 79, line 18.

<sup>69</sup> Az. No. 40, line 1.

<sup>70</sup> Az. No. 40, lines 3-4.

Ĵamalun aynadur, ĵan ēdar zarinĵ.<sup>71</sup>

(Your beauty is a mirror, your soul makes resin.)

E. animals:

Dilui dudi bulbul k`imi ōt`eir.<sup>72</sup>

(Your tongue sings like a parrot, like a nightingale.)

F. fruits and desserts:

Yar, dilun šak`ardur, dēhanun šuša.  
Lablarun badamdur, bal arasinda.<sup>73</sup>

(Beloved, your tongue is sugar, your mouth a cup,  
Your lips are almonds, coated with honey.)

G. luminaries:

Mah-ĵamali, ĵamarlu yar geleir.<sup>74</sup>

(The moon-faced, moon-like beloved comes.)

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<sup>71</sup> Az. No. 36, line 2. For Dowsett's transliteration and translation, see Dowsett, 1997, pp. 248-250. However, this trope is controversial, according to Dowsett, who interpreted *zarinĵ* as *zarang/zərang* in Persian/Azeri, "beech". In that sense it cannot be construed in this text. "Resin" is based on the Armenian translation, for which, see Baxč`inyan, 1987, p. 187.

<sup>72</sup> Az. No. 42, line 1. Unfortunately, it is translated in a third person voice in Baxč`inyan, 1987, p. 197, but the first person ("My tongue sings like the lip of the Nightingale") in Dowsett, 1997, p. 173. No reason for the rendering is given in either case. Therefore, I argue it can be interpreted in the second person as well, since the next line about the beloved's teeth definitely demands the second person.

<sup>73</sup> Az. No. 71. Lines 3-4. For Dowsett's translation, see Dowsett, 1997, p. 279.

<sup>74</sup> Az. No. 45, line 8.



Aydur ĵamalun, ilduzdur xalun.<sup>75</sup>

(Your face is a moon, your mole is a star.)

H. trees:

Ładun neĵa oxšadeim č`inara,  
Č`un č`inar odundur, yaxalar nara.<sup>76</sup>

(How did I compare your stature to a plane tree?  
Because the plane tree is firewood, it burns in fire.)

To illustrate the approach of other sixteenth to eighteenth century Armenian ašuls' songs I have selected all the examples from Łul Yovhannēs' songs, since the latter's tropes are the most varied of Armenian ašuls of this period other than Sayat`-Nova.

A. jewels, other precious stones, and precious metals:

Sinēd marmar k`ari nman.<sup>77</sup>

(Your bosom is like marble stone).

Sim oskeay, ĵawahirov marĵan č`arac hamematn.  
Inč` ōrinakov sahmanac, zardarac a k`o surat`n.<sup>78</sup>

(Golden silver, coral with jewel are incomparable.  
By what model is your face defined and adorned?)

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<sup>75</sup> Az. No. 79, line 17.

<sup>76</sup> Az. No. 67, lines 9-10. For Dowsett's transliteration and translation, see Dowsett, 1997, pp. 319-320.

<sup>77</sup> No. 1, line 18, Sahakyan, 1961, p. 160.

<sup>78</sup> No. 5, lines 12-13, Sahakyan, 1961, p. 165.

B. textiles: Not found.

C. flowers:

Vart` as, lalay as, asaman as, du rēhan as nazeli.<sup>79</sup>

(You are a rose, lily, lilac, graceful; you are basil.)

D. fragrant herbs, spices and perfumes:

Anoyš as calkayin, or kas nman susambari.<sup>80</sup>

(You are a floral aroma, when you stand like thyme.)

E. animals:

Arawōtean blbli pēs k'zart`nes dam sahar,  
K`alc`rik jēnēd hunlunalov č`ač`ay ktas mist andadar.<sup>81</sup>

(Like a morning nightingale, you wake the dew at dawn,  
From your sweet voice, you incessantly bring forward “chacha” by a gale.)

Du išxan as t`rč`noc`, k`ez t`awusi nman kanes.<sup>82</sup>

(You are the prince of birds. You are peacock-like.)

F. fruits and desserts:

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<sup>79</sup> No.4, line 10, Sahakyan, 1961, p. 164.

<sup>80</sup> No. 4, line 9, Sahakyan, 1961, p. 164.

<sup>81</sup> No. 5, lines 8-9, Sahakean, 1961, p. 165.

<sup>82</sup> No. 5, line 15, Sahakyan, 1961, p. 165.

Ccērd anoyš bari nman.<sup>83</sup>

(Your breasts are like sweet fruits.)<sup>84</sup>

G. stars:

Keř-keř unk`nerd nman lusniakin,  
Ēd nman ħudrat`i hilal č`em tesēl.<sup>85</sup>

(Your hooked ears look like a new moon.  
A crescent as powerful as that I have not seen.)

H. trees:

Bōy unes č`inari pēs,  
Salvi caři nman as.<sup>86</sup>

(You have a stature like a plane tree,  
You resemble a cypress.)

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the foregoing listing. The first is that Sayat`-Nova's individual tropes are innovative, while the range of categories he employs emerges as much more conventional, as only the category of textiles is rarely attested in the works of other bards. Comprehensiveness of application and high

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<sup>83</sup> No. 1, line 19, Sahakyan, 1961, p. 161.

<sup>84</sup> It is not without interest to mention here, that Lul Yovhannēs' disciple Yart'un Ōhli almost duplicated lines 18-19 (Footnotes 47, 53) from this song in his own work: Yart'un Ōhli's song No. 1, lines 25-26, Sahakyan, 1961, p. 214.

<sup>85</sup> No. 2, lines 11-12, Sahakyan, 1961, p. 162.

<sup>86</sup> No. 6, lines 27-28, Sahakyan, 1961, p. 168.

frequency of use also characterize Sayat`-Nova's profile over against his counterparts, few of whom use all the tropes. Indeed, it is common for a bard to utilize no more than half of the above categories.

In eighteenth-century songs, it is quite clear that the average frequency of tropes tends to increase over time in a trend more easily observable in Armenian songs. In Łul Yovhannēs' songs it is not uncommon to find examples with three or more tropes per stanza, and two or three such stanzas per song (partly also because the five-stanza format is more common in Armenian songs), including several instances where tropes even occur in the first stanza. However, in Sayat`-Nova's Armenian songs this frequency represents only the average, if not below that. In contrast, the frequency of tropes in Sayat`-Nova's Azeri songs is definitely lower than his Armenian compositions, and therefore much more conventional, though the sorts of tropes there are as varied as in his Armenian songs. At the same time, one should note that exceptions exist to the above trend of increased usage of tropes by sixteenth to eighteenth century Armenian ašuls. The two other major Armenian ašuls after Sayat`-Nova, Šamč'i Melk`ō and K`ič'ik`-Nova, both from Tiflis, do not have numerous songs left in general, while, in their preserved works, love is much less important a theme overall, and in their works, the frequency of tropes drops to the level of the early Isfahani Armenian ašuls. Even for Łul Yovhannēs and Sayat`-Nova, though the frequency of tropes is increasing, it is hard to argue for a linear development from the earlier bards in Isfahan to the latter in Tiflis, since no proof exists of contact, exchange, or influence among Armenian ašuls in two cities in the eighteenth century, though it was all possible.

The same reasons behind the success of Sayat`-Nova's tropes are applicable to most aspects of his songs, primarily his Armenian songs. As mentioned before the discussion on tropes, Sayat`-Nova applied every major rhetorical figure in his songs. If we look at Sayat`-Nova's concrete usage of each figure in isolation, many appear rather common among sixteenth to eighteenth century bards, and no better than theirs, for example, the belle's hair as fragrant as basil, or her eyebrow like a bow,<sup>87</sup> her lips or tongue as sweet as sugar or honey, her breast like a pomegranate,<sup>88</sup> her stature like a cypress, her face like the moon and sun, etc. In contrast, some of his unique tropes recur in a number of his songs, e.g. the image "treasure from the bottom of the sea", which is unique to Sayat`-Nova among early modern bards, is repeated three times in his Armenian songs:

Antak covi mič`en hanac angin govhar is, govveli.<sup>89</sup>

(You are a priceless pearl taken from the bottomless sea, praiseworthy one.)

Antak covi mič`en hanac aknir unim lal u t`ila.<sup>90</sup>

(I have precious stones taken from the bottomless sea, ruby and gold.)

Covemen dus ēkac zara is, gozal.<sup>91</sup>

(You are mother-of-pearl that emanated from the sea, belle.)

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<sup>87</sup> Sayat`-Nova, Az. No. 78, line 3; Łul Yovhannēs, No. 3, line 12.

<sup>88</sup> Arm. No. 21, line 5.

<sup>89</sup> Arm. No. 4, line 4.

<sup>90</sup> Arm. No. 10, line 19.

<sup>91</sup> Arm. No. 13, line 16.

Meanwhile, conventional phrases like “I fell ill for love of you,” or “I became crazy for love of you” are repeated 8 times altogether in Sayat`-Nova’s Armenian songs.<sup>92</sup> This blemish is even more apparent in his Azeri songs, where more phrases are repeated, like “I have much pain,”<sup>93</sup> which is one of the reasons for their lower standard of perfection. But in general, Sayat`-Nova’s innovation in individual tropes and the frequency with which he applies all the figures surpass all other bards. This is how Sayat`-Nova forges his own flamboyant style.

Next, let us consider the categories of the belle’s beauty in Sayat`-Nova’s songs. Baxč`inyan has reached the conclusion that Sayat`-Nova’s belle is not only beautiful physically and dressed well in a static sense, but is also elegant in movement. As in one of his Armenian songs:

Ašxark`ən cov, dun meč`ən nav, man is gali, lang is anum.<sup>94</sup>

(Beyond the land is the sea, you are a boat in its midst; you are sailing.)

Moreover, if the reader pays more attention, it is observable in one of his Azeri songs that the belle is not only beautiful statically or elegant in moving, but also intellectually astute:

Gormadum san t`ak`i saresar alli,  
Gizlin xialundan yanulam yanul.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Armenian songs No. 5, 19, 20, 24 (crazy), 30, 39, 40 (crazy), 46.

<sup>93</sup> “Dardum č`ox”, “Dardum č`oxdur”, or other variants, in Azeri songs No. 42, 74, 80, 85, 89.

<sup>94</sup> Arm. No. 31, line 16.

<sup>95</sup> Az. No. 67, lines 7-8.

(I have not seen anyone as extremely clever as you,  
From secret imagination of you I am burning, burning.)

But other bards were also innovative in their description, like Yart'un Ōfli:

Mankut'enēd unes usum,  
Č'es ěnganel łam u łusum.<sup>96</sup>

(You have an education from your childhood,  
You have not fallen into grief and sorrow.)

Therefore, Sayat'-Nova participates along with other eighteenth century Armenian bards in expanding the sphere of what constituted beauty in their depictions of the belle. Such a new tendency seems concomitant with the development of Armenian communities in commercial centers like Venice, Amsterdam, Marseilles, St. Petersburg, Calcutta etc., in which the education of Armenian girls first became the concern of the community, the earliest discussion of girls' schooling beginning in 1757.<sup>97</sup> From such beginnings, reference to the belle's intelligence or noble mind grows in popularity in Armenian bardic literature of the following century.<sup>98</sup>

In addition to the higher frequency of tropes, another aspect of the depiction of the belle in Armenian songs of the early modern period is the gradual inclusion of a more

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<sup>96</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, p. 233.

<sup>97</sup> On the development of Armenian girls' education, see S. Peter Cowe, "Print Capital, Corporate Identity, and the Democratization of Discourse in Early Modern Armenian History," *Le Muséon* 126 (2013), pp. 319-368 (esp. 328).

<sup>98</sup> Š. S. Grigoryan, "Ašutakan poezia" in: *Hay nor grakanut'yan patmut'yun*, vol. 1, Yerevan, 1962, pp. 266-267.

extensive depiction belle's physical attributes than was attempted by Turkic bards. As in the examples earlier this section, if in the early songs, the focus concentrated more on features of the belle's head and bosom, by the mid-eighteenth century Armenian *ašuġs'* songs in Armenian and Armeno-Turkish alike, expanded coverage to the hand and waist. The most elaborate instance of this penchant was left not by Sayat'-Nova but Ēul Yovhannēs, who in his song beginning *Goveli hōsn u ĵamald* "Your praiseworthy beauty"<sup>99</sup> included the fullest depiction of female beauty ever to appear in Early Modern bardic literature over the course of 66 lines.

In reviewing the great success of Sayat'-Nova's Armenian songs, his rich experience, knowledge, and maturity in the art are often emphasized. The latter argument is based on the fact that most of his Armenian songs are dated, and all these derive from the years 1752 to 1759, before his final fall from the Georgian court, and therefore from his last period as an *ašuġ*. But this sort of argument automatically poses the question of Sayat'-Nova's Azeri songs. Most of the dated examples come from the same period. Hence, is it possible to establish that these late Azeri songs are better than the others, too? After reading both, it seems unlikely. Those dated Azeri songs from this period are not necessarily the most formally complex or most distinguished works in his Azeri corpus. However, that does not necessarily lead to a sharp disparity between the quality of his Armenian and Azeri works from this period, since the number of clearly dated Azeri songs is merely 24, proportionally much smaller than the 26 dated

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<sup>99</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 167-169.



Armenian songs from a total of 55 in the Davt`ar and Ioane's manuscript.

As the conclusion of this chapter, the general structure and literary merits of Sayat`-Nova's Armenian song have been set in comparison with other early modern bards' works. The remaining issues and more detailed discussion will be dealt with in the next chapter, where the potential influence from elevated poetic traditions in the area will be examined.

## Chapter 5

Sayat`-Nova, the sixteenth to eighteenth century Armenian aşuİ tradition, and elite poetic traditions of the area

Section 1 Sayat`-Nova, the sixteenth to eighteenth century Armenian aşuİ tradition, and the Perso-Turkish elevated poetic tradition

Since the classical Turkish and Azeri poetic traditions are not always distinguishable from each other and both came under comprehensive and profound Persian influence, I shall treat these three traditions under one general title.

### A. Possible impact from Classical Persian Literature

Cultural connections between the Armenians and Iranians have endured millennia. The development of pagan mythology in Armenia was enriched by successive strands of Zoroastrian origin.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the gusan bardic tradition emerged in both the Armenian and Iranian context under the Parthian dynasty.<sup>2</sup> Dari Persian poetry established itself in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries and assumed the status of the most accomplished elite poetic form from the Near East to Transoxiana and the Indian subcontinent. It shed its enduring influence on all the other poetic traditions in this vast area, firstly those bearing Islamicate cultures like Urdu, Azeri, Kurdish, and Turkish, and then secondarily those of neighboring Christian cultures like Armenian and Georgian. Thus, the eleventh-century Armenian scholar Grigor Magistros knew Persian

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<sup>1</sup> For details, see James Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia*, Harvard Iranian Series, No. 5, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1987.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Boyce, "The Parthian *gōsān* and Iranian Minstrel Tradition," *JRAS*, 1957, pp. 10-45.

and had knowledge of episodes in the Iranian epic,<sup>3</sup> while the Armenian poet Kostandin Erznkac'i of the turn of the fourteenth century employed a syllabicized variant of the *mutaqarib* prosody in one of his compositions.<sup>4</sup> More significantly, the major sixteenth-century Armenian ecclesiastical and literary figure, Grigoris Aġt'amarac'i composed a number of macaronic poems in Armenian and Persian.<sup>5</sup> Composing in Persian was also a capability shared by Sayat'-Nova and a number of other sixteenth to eighteenth century bards, who also include allusions from Persian poetry in their songs, as discussed in the last two sections of Chapter 3.<sup>6</sup> As already revealed from examples in chapter 4, the major categories of tropes in bardic songs in

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<sup>3</sup> Babgen Č'ugaszyan, *Hay-Iranakan grakan arnč'ut'yunner, V-XVIII dd*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakč'ut'yun, Yerevan, 1963, p.24.

<sup>4</sup> As quoted from Č'ugaszyan, 1963, p. 25, note 2.

<sup>5</sup> Č'ugaszyan, 1963, pp. 128-168.

<sup>6</sup> As far as I know, such bards include Armenian Yart'un Ōġli and Azeri Qurbani. However, Yart'un Ōġli's Persian songs were not published by Aram Ereġmean, whose 1930s publication on him is still the most comprehensive. Qurbani's Persian song is a *qit'ə*, originally meaning "fragment", and later becoming a poetic form, published in his 1990 collection of works in Azeri transcription. Here I attach it with my tentative English translation:

#### Mast

Cəng ba xud, sülh ba düşnən təriqe dine mast,  
Kafərü Mö'min həme yekrəng dər aine mast.

Əz dəme sərde səbükməğzan zica key mirəvim,  
Tudeye ġəbra qübare daməne təmkine mast.

Bəhse həftadu do millət həq bovəd dər kişe eşq,  
Hər ke in fəhmīd nure dideye həqbine mast.

#### ( Drunkness

War with oneself, peace with the enemy, that is the path of our religion,  
Infidel and believer are the same in our rule.

When we leave the light-mindeds' cold breath,  
The dust of chances aggravates the outskirts of our continence.

The word of seventy-two peoples would be the god in the cult of love,  
That whoever understands it is the light of our God-seeing eyes.)

Qəzənfər Kazımov ed., *Qurbani*, Bakı Universiteti Nəşriyyatı, 1990, p. 191

various languages are identical to other traditions of lyric poetry in the region, including classical Persian poetry. In the remainder of this section we shall explore possible relations between classical Persian poetry and the bardic tradition in terms of motifs, and tropes, especially with regard to Sayat`-Nova's output.

The first theme that attracts our attention is the treatment of love in the classical Persian ghazal and aşuî songs. Meisami has concluded much about the norms that applied in lyric ghazals. Here only those of direct relevance for a comparison with aşuî songs will be reviewed. According to her, to a great extent, the classical Persian ghazal should be regarded as a courtly genre, in which:

the lovely youths addressed and extolled . . . should not be construed as literal participants in a factual love affair (or the poems as revelatory of the poet's sexual proclivities) . . . they provide the occasion for the poet's song and the pretext for his presentation of the various states of love. In ghazal . . . it is the portrayal of this experience that is central . . . the experience itself is both ideal and a fiction.<sup>7</sup>

A function of the ghazal is:

guiding the audience toward an understanding of the ideals of love and their transcendence of the *realia* of love's actuality"<sup>8</sup>. "The primary focus of the ghazal is on the lover, equated . . . with the poet", and always unfolded from an "ever-present 'I'". Yet "the 'I' to whom both love and song relate proves elusive; the song is not personal, the 'I' not flesh and blood"<sup>9</sup>. "The 'I' of the ghazal is presented as an idealized (and often fallible) participant in the kind of love affair to which his audience may be presumed to aspire". "The convention of the takhallus points to the fact that the 'I' of the ghazal functions . . . as a deliberately constituted

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<sup>7</sup> Julie Scott Meisami, *Medieval Persian court poetry*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1987, p. 251.

<sup>8</sup> Meisami, 1987, p. 252.

<sup>9</sup> Meisami, 1987, pp. 260-261.

persona--that of the poet-lover . . . that is that the poem is not to be interpreted autobiographically.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, the love story in a ghazal should be fundamentally regarded as a fiction:

Central to this fiction is the beloved's superiority (in both physical and moral terms, physical beauty being but the outward mirror of the soul's virtue) . . . Hyperbolic description abounds . . . Such expressions invoking the 'religion of love' should not be taken as proof that the love described is spiritual rather than physical; they exemplify the analogical habit of thought which sees the beloved's place in the lover's world as parallel to that of God for the believer, setting the beloved at the highest point of the lover's universe.<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, "although the refined and idealistic nature of love was certainly stressed, its physical aspect was by no means ignored."<sup>12</sup> However:

in the courtly ghazal, it is not the sex or even the 'real' status (human or transcendent) of the beloved that is of primary importance, but the qualities she<sup>13</sup> embodies. The beloved (whether youth, man, or woman, slave or free, or God Himself) is accorded absolute supremacy in the love relationship because she is, by definition, the noblest of creation; . . . and while she may have many lovers without the taint of infidelity (for, after all, who could resist her?), the long-suffering lover is permitted only one beloved.

Separation is the lover's natural state; and the vast majority of ghazals are love complaints addressed to the absent (or indifferent) beloved. For . . . it is the unattainability of the beloved, and his own consequent service without expectation of requital, that permits the lover to demonstrate his own value and his membership in the company of those ennobled by love."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Meisami, 1987, p. 262.

<sup>11</sup> Meisami, 1987, pp. 254-255.

<sup>12</sup> Meisami, 1987, p. 245.

<sup>13</sup> "I use the feminine pronoun only for convenience", as quoted from Meisami's rendering (not in parentheses), Meisami, 1987, p. 254.

<sup>14</sup> Meisami, 1987, p. 255.

The lover is one of

the elite (or aristocracy) of love; he is also, paradoxically, love's slave . . . While the beloved is frequently addressed as a ruler, love itself is often personified as a shah or sultan who holds sway over this aristocracy and who has numberless servants and vast armies under his command.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless:

although the vassal of love may elect to serve without requital, secure in the knowledge that his love service provides proof of his innate virtue and nobility, such a renunciation of his rights does not absolve the beloved of obligation toward him. It is here, I think, that the depiction of idealized love by the Persian poets departs most significantly from that of their European counterparts: in the assumption that the beloved, however exalted, is still a partner in a relationship that confers both rights and obligations on each member. Love is a contract that binds both parties . . . the beloved has the obligation to conduct herself according to the protocols that govern such relationships; more specifically, it is the beloved who, precisely because of her exalted status, must observe in her conduct the principles of justice.<sup>16</sup>

Still,

if the lover has no choice but to love and to serve, the beloved, by contrast, does have the choice between justice and injustice. And while the lover, in his self-sacrificing mode, may attribute his suffering to the turning sphere rather than to the beloved--who is, by definition, 'all justice and equity'--her shortcomings are nevertheless noted.<sup>17</sup>

The ghazal's "language, imagery, and thematic content show little apparent development . . . during the centuries when it was at its peak."<sup>18</sup> Still it "is,

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<sup>15</sup> Meisami, 1987, p. 256.

<sup>16</sup> Meisami, 1987, pp. 258-260.

<sup>17</sup> Meisami, 1987, pp. 263-264.

<sup>18</sup> Meisami, 1987, p. 240.

paradoxically, both highly conventional and highly flexible.”<sup>19</sup> By “its primary generic topic—love—and by the wider implications of this topic,” for example, “by virtue of analogical imagery and structure,” the ghazal assumed manifold functions, [and] thus became applicable for varied occasions.<sup>20</sup>

If the poet adds nothing new, that is, if he perceives no new meaning in his material, but merely produces a rhetorical elaboration of it, then he is, indeed, nothing but a slavish imitator. He not only must improve on his model rhetorically, but “make it new”, and make it distinctively his own.<sup>21</sup>

Building on the conclusion arrived at in Chapter 3, the comparison between the norms of Persian ghazals and bardic love songs in the first person appears very fruitful. Early Modern bards mainly derived from an urban background and served primarily city residents. At the same time, they generally received less education than court poets and did not enjoy the high social status accorded the latter. The treatment of love in their songs is as conventional, if not more so, than court ghazals, with which they bear similarities, though at a lower level of sophistication. The plot always unfolds in the following manner: praise of the beloved’s physical beauty that arouses the bard’s yearning, which, in turn, provokes his suffering at being separated from her. The song then concludes with an appeal for her response. There is no suggestion that the beloved belongs to an elite class as in the ghazal, yet she is still expected to respond as a matter of justice. However, the explicit or implicit homoeroticism of many elevated

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<sup>19</sup> Meisami, 1987, p. 241.

<sup>20</sup> Meisami, 1987, pp. 242, 306.

<sup>21</sup> Meisami, 1987, pp. 308-309.

ghazals<sup>22</sup> is almost nonexistent in bardic counterparts. The overwhelming majority of early modern bards were male, and explicitly addressed the belle in their works as “girl”, and emphasized her femininity in extolling her physical attributes. Mystic notions like the love for God hardly ever appear in bardic love songs either, most of which express a purely secular relationship. Generally, bardic descriptions and tropes are also highly conventional, if not identical, as illustrated in Chapters 3 and 4. Therefore, granted their conventional form and meaning, little possibility is left for contemplating any non-fictional love story or allegorical meaning behind the text. Hence, overall, bardic love lyric may be regarded as a “simplified” version of Persian court poetry, though it is unclear what the precise connection is between them in view of the many possible intermediaries like the elevated Azeri, Ottoman, and Armenian lyric traditions.

Among bardic compositions, a divergence from the standard that places much of the emphasis on a description on the beloved’s physical beauty in preference for a description of the lover’s psychology, or other people’s amazement at the beloved’s beauty, as in the songs of Łul Yovhannēs and Yart’un Ōġli, already constitutes a major innovation.<sup>23</sup> Even Sayat`-Nova might not be regarded as of their caliber with regard to love norms, as his major innovations lie in other elsewhere, as discussed in Chapter 4. However, certain facets of his oeuvre, primarily his Armenian compositions, benefit from comparison with Sa’di’s love ghazals, both often being regarded as the paramount examples in their respective spheres.

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<sup>22</sup> Meisami, 1987, pp 245-252, 254, *passim*..

<sup>23</sup> Łul Yovhannēs has four such songs, for which, see Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 170-174. On the two composed by Yart’un Ōġli, see Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 218-219, 221-222.



The first parallel worthy of investigation is the claim advanced by some scholars that behind their songs lie true love stories. From Gēorg Asatur on, it has been conjectured in Sayat`-Nova's case and later developed by later Armenian scholars' in decoding the identity of the beloved in a number of the bard's songs, of which the most complicated is *Yis Kanč`um im lalanin* "I cry for my 'Lalanin'" or simply "I call my 'Lalanin'".<sup>24</sup> In their estimation, the figure referred to is the Georgian princess Anna Batonišvili, King Erekle II's sister.<sup>25</sup> If in Sa'di's case there is less agreement that some of his love ghazals are based on his authentic experience of love, the question has at least been raised by certain scholars.<sup>26</sup> In support of their argument regarding Sayat Nova, scholars like Paruyr Sevak, Henrik Baxč`inyan, and Charles Dowsett have observed the unique quality of sincerity in certain of his love songs, while for Sa'di, Ali Dashti comments:

When we read the ghazals by Sa'di, not only we see a capable, skillful poet but we have before us a person who has loved someone, has suffered with disappointments, and has been entranced by beauty in its purest sense . . . It would be impossible for the art of composition alone to bring about all these poems, dreams, complaints, rapture, and

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<sup>24</sup> Baxč`inyan's Armenian Song No. 47 in Baxč`inyan, 1987, pp. 58-59. The translation of the title is taken from Dowsett, 1997, pp. 100-109.

<sup>25</sup> As quoted from Baxč`inyan, 1988, pp. 298-304. Major arguments for this opinion include:

1. The rhyming words in the bayat`i stanzas of this song, *lalani*, *yarani*, *zayani*, *merani*, *masani*, all end in syllables *ani*, which is the dative form of the name Anna in Tiflis Armenian (Anna can be realized as Ana in Georgian and Tiflis Armenian). Therefore, all these superficially meaningless rhymes are compounds made up of attributes and the nuclear name Anna: to (attribute) Anna.
2. The Armenian letter names mentioned in the third and fifth bayat`i stanzas: *nu*, *ayb*, *se*, *ayb*, might be explained as the acronym for Nova, Anna, Sayat`, Anna respectively as well. In this way, the two lines that bear two of these four letters can be explained as reflecting the separation of Sayat`-Nova and Anna.
3. Three other songs, Armenian No. 57, Georgian No. 7 and 10, also contain phrases, which can be deciphered as containing the name Anna.

<sup>26</sup> For example, Ali Dashti raises this question in his *Dar qaramru-yi Sa'di*, Mu'assasa-yi intisharat-i Amir Kabir, Tehran, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., 1381/2002, pp. 304-310. For an English translation, see *The realm of Sa'di*. Sayeh Dashti trans., Mazda Publishers, Costa Mesa, CA, 2013, pp. 228-232.

ecstasy.<sup>27</sup>

However, the claim of sincerity faces a number of problems. Only four of Sayat`-Nova's songs, two Armenian and two Georgian, have been deciphered as inscribing the name Anna,<sup>28</sup> while there are even less data for Sa'di's ghazals. Moreover, as discussed above, the norm of love in both bardic songs and ghazals is highly stereotypical. For either a bard or a writer of ghazals, the appreciation of their love songs derives mainly from the way they express the love, as well as their presentation, i.e. the manner in which a work is performed, which is especially true for bards, rather than their direct expression of their individual experience of love in the real world, which is more significant in modern poetry. As consummate artists, Sayat`-Nova and Sa'di's success was measured by innovative imagery and new ways of expression that would normally be the product of their skill and inventiveness. Moreover, it is arguable that some of Sayat`-Nova's songs outside the group that has been decoded are artistically highly accomplished, thus accounting for their great popularity.<sup>29</sup> Even less is sure for Sa'di. As a result, I would contend that if the quality of sincerity is to be predicated of Sayat`-Nova's love songs, it should be interpreted in terms of his real love experience provided him the vigor for his writing, a likely example of which is his continuous compositions in the genre of musaddas in Armenian between 1758 and 1759 among other works. These musaddas, nine in total, all are about unrequited love, sung in the *hang* "tune" or

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<sup>27</sup> Dashti, 2002, pp. 304-305, and 2013, p. 228.

<sup>28</sup> Baxč`inyan's Armenian songs No. 43, 57 and Georgian songs No. 7, 10. See Baxč`inyan, 1988, pp. 298-304.

<sup>29</sup> Like Baxč`inyan's Armenian songs Nos. 16 "Ašxarumēs ax č`im k`aši", quoted already in Chapter 4, and 34 "K`ani vur jan im".

“mode” of the song starting with *Diba u engidunya* “Brocade and New World (clothes),” some with many literary innovations beyond the conventional.<sup>30</sup> The passion that erupted in these works in the same mode may be identified with the vigor that animated his love songs, which may have been engendered by real experience. Nevertheless, we should not assume that the actual contents of the works were drawn from his biography. Nor does such a vigor assure the inventiveness either. Indeed, Sayat`-Nova’s songs on topics other than love, like the ode to his kamancha,<sup>31</sup> his petition to King Erekle II,<sup>32</sup> and the lament on his ill-starred fate,<sup>33</sup> may be sincerer than his love songs as a category, since these rather uncommon themes do not labor under the same stereotypical generic requirements.

Scholars have similarly raised the issue of the possible influence of mysticism on the works of Sayat`-Nova and Sa’di. However, apart from a few Turkish aşiks like Gevheri and Ömer whose affiliation with Sufi orders is verifiable, it is difficult to establish that a certain bard composed mystical songs, though, as a very influential trend in both spirituality and literature from the Middle Ages on, one might expect that mysticism would have exerted an influence on some of them. In that regard, it is interesting that Baxč`inyan identifies the self-denial motif in Sayat`-Nova’s works, i.e. the sublimity of the beloved and the unworthiness of the lover, as common to mystical

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<sup>30</sup> Baxč`inyan’s Armenian songs Nos. 23-31. See also Dowsett, 1997, pp. 149-172, 286-287. Dowsett notes that Sayat`-Nova’s total eleven songs from 1758-1759 were sung to the same “tune or mode” (Dowsett, 1997, p. 286) suggesting a lack of musical inventiveness that might have contributed to his fall from court favor. But, as T`ahmizyan’s argument indicates, as cited in Chapter 4, the word *hang* can mean “mode” rather than “tune”, “melody”, thus indicating the commonality exists at a higher level of invention.

<sup>31</sup> Baxč`inyan’s Armenian Song No. 42.

<sup>32</sup> Baxč`inyan’s Armenian Song No. 37.

<sup>33</sup> Baxč`inyan’s Armenian Song No. 41.

literatures, Armenian and Sufi alike.<sup>34</sup> However, as stated at the end of Chapter 3, the influence of Islamic ideas on Sayat`-Nova as a whole is very peripheral.

In this regard, comments by Homa Katouzian on Sa'di's ghazals may be appropriate:

In other words, the language and passion of mystic poetry is likely to have influenced the language of love. Some have gone further and claimed that the expression of human love itself is everywhere a worldly form of expressing desire for the mystical beloved, or that the beloved in what looks like human love simply acts as a symbol for the mystic object of loving. This seems unlikely, and is mere speculation.<sup>35</sup>

Let us now pursue our comparison of Sayat`-Nova and Sa'di into the realm of poetic themes and figures of speech. As is common to both poetic forms, Sayat`-Nova's aşuġ songs and Sa'di's ghazals are replete with descriptions of the beloved's physical beauty, the praise of the beloved, the self-effacing lover, and the latter's suffering of separation from the beloved. However, Sayat`-Nova never talks about the joy of union with the beloved as Sa'di does.<sup>36</sup> As Baxĉ`inyan has concluded, Sayat`-Nova's love is definitely unrequited. Nor does the bard ever talk about the conflict between love and reason, or that between the lover and beloved as Sa'di does either<sup>37</sup>. Regarding figures of speech, Sayat`-Nova would never use terms with a negative connotation to describe his beloved, in contrast to Sa'di, who frequently attributes *fetneh*<sup>38</sup> "sedition, revolt"

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<sup>34</sup> Baxĉ`inyan, 1987, p. 214.

<sup>35</sup> Homa Katouzian, *Sa'di, the poet of live, love and compassion*, Makers of the Muslim world, Oneworld, Oxford, England, 2006, pp. 37-38.

<sup>36</sup> Katouzian, 2006, pp. 50-62.

<sup>37</sup> Katouzian, 2006, pp. 65-67.

<sup>38</sup> In IJMES transcription: fiṭnah.

to the beloved and the consequences of her actions.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, the bard never uses irony to describe his beloved. Indeed, the description of the two sorts of conflicts, or the usage of irony in Early Modern bardic works is rarely seen at all. Rather, these phenomena are suggestive of the simpler, less sophisticated ambience of bardic songs in contrast to that of the elevated Persian and, to a lesser degree, Azerbaijani poetic traditions.

The final issue to be discussed in this section is the possible impact of the so-called “Indian style”. Ali Dashti comments:

Most poets of Sa’di’s era, obsessed with the novelty of concepts in their lyrical poems, especially those attempting to praise the physical beauty of the beloved, have gone to exorbitant lengths and have achieved results, which are variously, grotesque, bizarre, and at time perverse.

One of his examples is, “Some have even likened the locks in the beloved’s hair to such things as a scorpion’s tail or a slithering snake”<sup>40</sup>. Such innovations are typical of the “Indian style” of poetry that not only flourished in Iranian Persian poetry, but also in Persian, Urdu, or Turkish poetry in the Ottoman Empire and Indian subcontinent.<sup>41</sup> According to Dashti, “Sa’di’s tendency is toward simplicity and natural flow,”<sup>42</sup> and therefore he does not fall into this trap. Similarly, it is difficult to find

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<sup>39</sup> Katouzian, 2006, p. 62.

<sup>40</sup> Dashti, 2002, p. 302 and 2013, p. 226.

<sup>41</sup> For Persian poetry in this style, see Ehsan Yarshater, “The Indian or Safavid style: progress or decline?”, in Ehsan Yarshater ed., *Persian literature*, Columbia Lectures on Iranian Studies, No. 3, in Bibliotheca Persica, State University of New York Press, Albany, NY, 1988, pp. 249-288. For this style in Turkish Divan poetry, see, for example, Babacan İsrail, *Klâsik Türk şiirinin sonbaharı: Sebki-i Hindi (Hint üslubu)*, Akçağ Yayınları, Ankara, 2010 and Ozan Yılmaz, “Sebk-i Hindi mi, Sebk-i Türki mi?”, *Türk edebiyatı aylık fikir ve sanat dergisi*, November 2006, issue 397, pp. 22-25.

<sup>42</sup> Dashti, 2002, p. 297 and 2013, p. 224.

commonality between Sayat`-Nova's tropes and those of the "Indian style" either. As analysed in Chapter 4, Sayat`-Nova's tropes are innovative in comparison with most bards. However, he hardly invents anything "grotesque, bizzare or perverse", but discovers new objects for comparison, most of which fall within a pre-existing category, yet hardly used by anyone before him. Therefore, the overwhelming majority of the categories of tropes in early modern bardic songs remain fairly conventional, pointing to a major dichotomy between court circles in Constantinople in the Ottoman sphere, and Isfahan in Iran and the bardic tradition and ambience.

#### B. Possible impact from Classical Azeri Literature

Classical Azeri literature in essence is a cognate of Ottoman divan literature under even more influence from classical Persian literature. Shah Ismail I, founder of the Safavid dynasty, was himself one of the most celebrated Azerbaijani poets under his penname Khaṭā'ī/Xətai. From Xətai on, traditional Turkic syllabic meters were not so underrated in classical Azeri poetry as in the divan tradition. At least two major Azerbaijani poets of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, Xətai<sup>43</sup> and Molla Pənah Vaqif,<sup>44</sup> left a considerable volume of works in syllabic meters. Of those three, Molla Pənah Vaqif was a contemporary of Sayat`-Nova, and his complete works were overwhelmingly written in syllabic meters. Moreover, Sayat`-Nova's knowledge of

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<sup>43</sup> For a very brief account of his poetry, see Ahmet Caferoğlu's part in *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta*, vol. II, pp. 643-644. There is a full chapter on him in Azərbaycan SSR Elmlər Akademiyası ed.: *Azərbaycan ədəbiyyatı tarixi, cəld. 1. Ən qədim dövrdən XVIII əsrin sonuna qədər*, Azərbaycan SSR Elmlər Akademiyası Nəşriyyatı, Baku, 1960, pp. 324-339; with several pages on his poetic accomplishment (pp. 328-336), but only three on his love poems (pp. 332-335).

<sup>44</sup> (1717-1797) He wrote in classical genres, but his language is closer to the colloquial. See Caferoğlu's comment in *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta*, vol. II, pp. 650-652, and *Azərbaycan ədəbiyyatı tarixi, cəld. 1*, pp. 552-576.

Xətai is evident from his copying of one the latter's couplets after his Azeri song No. 3 in the Davt`ar.<sup>45</sup> Beyond this, however, there is no clear indication of influence of Xətai or Vaqif on Sayat`-Nova. Moreover, the attempt to pinpoint any definite influence of either's Azeri works on Sayat`-Nova is problematized by the former's debt both to the elevated Persian influence and the traditional syllabic meters that originate in Turkic folklore, both of which are inherited in parallel by the bards.

### C. Possible impact from Ottoman divan literature

Even among the Turkic bards of the Early Modern period, only a few like Aşık Ömer, Gevheri, and Kâtibî are under the profound influence of divan literature, which is attested by their elevated language, the preponderance of 'arūd meters in Gevheri's works, and their almost random use of Persian phrases, Persian grammatical structures (an overdose of the izafe construction), and a very free word order, all of which are significantly rarer, if not completely absent from other Turkic bards' works, but very typical of divan poetry. All the other early modern Turkish aşiks in the Ottoman domain wrote in the language of everyday speech rather than this highly "Persianized" Ottoman literary language. Clearly, Aşık Ömer's family origin and higher education and Gevheri's Sufi identity explain their use of such elevated forms, as mentioned in the

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<sup>45</sup> The couplet, according to the transcription given in the endnote to this song in Baxç`inyan, 1987, reads:

Dilbarun angina geymiş şol dēblumu susani,  
Geç`ma namard k`orp`isina, İoy ap`arson su sani.

(The belle put on lily-colored clothes,  
Don't cross the inhumane bridge! Let water take you!)

However, the purpose of quoting it here is unclear. See Baxç`inyan, 1987, p. 480. Caferoğlu also counts Sayat`-Nova a follower of Vaqif (*Philologiae Turicae Fundamenta*, vol. II, p. 652), but without supporting argument.

notes to their biographies in Chapter 2. After all, Sufi mystical connotations permeated divan poetry as well, while most of the founders of Sufi orders popular in the Ottoman Empire were from Persian-speaking areas, like Mevlana Rumi and Hacı Bektaş, and the former's most important works were all written in Persian.

It is particularly noteworthy that the styles of Aşık Ömer and Gevheri are very similar to the Turkish works by ethnic Armenian aşufls affiliated to Bektashism. They share the same high frequency of vocabulary and images, with a large interspersing of Persian words and structures, and presumably composed for the same purpose, to express the authors' religious emotions. Since all they were all Sufi adherents, it is very understandable that their understanding of and emotional perspective on those tenets share much in common. By way of illustration I cite examples from the divans of Gevheri and Seyyahi, an Armenian probably from the seventeenth century who joined the Bektaşî order.<sup>46</sup>

Gevheri's:

Hicr-i ruhsârınla âteşler bıraktın cânıma,  
Dağlar yaktın sitemle sîne-i uryânıma,  
Hâsılı kâr eyledi aşkın dil-i sûzânıma,  
Vechi var yansam yakılsam aşk ile sultânıma.

Düştü hasrtele dil-i âvâremiz sahrâlara,  
Seyl-i aşkım âlemi gark eyledi sahrâlara,  
Va'de-i vaslın beni salmaktadır ferdâlara,  
Vechi var yansam yakılsam aşk ile sultânıma.

Bir harâret var ki dilde idemem şerh ü beyan,

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<sup>46</sup> Mehmet Bayrak, *Alevi-Bektaşî edebiyatında Ermeni âşıkları (aşuğlar)*, Öz-Ge Yayınları, Ankara, 2005, p. 627.



Her nefes çarhı siyah etmektedir âh ü figan,  
El-aman dostum şecer- âsâ tutuştum el-aman,  
Vechi var yansam yakılsam aşk ile sultânıma.

Hayli demdir arz-ı ruhsar itmedin ey serv- kad,  
Gevherî zâr ider beni bu cevr tâ-ebed,  
Tesliye-i hâtır eyle tâkat yok sabre meded,  
Vechi var yansam yakılsam aşk ile sultânıma.<sup>47</sup>

(Your departure with your soul left fevers for my soul,  
Unjustly you burned the mountains of my bare bosom,  
Love of you harvested my burning heart,  
If I burn with love for my sultan, it is deserved.

With craving our errant hearts fell to deserts,  
The deluge of love for you drowned the world in deserts,  
The promise of reunion with you releases me for tomorrows,  
If I burn with love for my sultan, it is deserved.

There is a fervor that I cannot foil in my heart with explanation or declaration,  
Every breath is making the world sad, sighing and shouting,  
Alas, my friend, I burned the scepter, alas!  
If I burn with love for my sultan, it is deserved.

For a long time you haven't honored your soul,<sup>48</sup> oh the cypress-statured one,  
Gevheri is moaning for this eternal torment on me,  
Console the mind! There is no patience which helps to forbear,  
If I burn with love for my sultan, it is deserved.)

Seyyahi's:

Bir kadeh nûş eyleyüp sen ey peri pervaz ile,  
Ser koyup meydan-ı aşka, raks ederler saz ile,  
Şimdiden öldürmedik âşık komadın naz ile,  
Korkarım, bir gamzesi cellât olursun akibet!

Cilvegâh ettin cemalin gülşenin ayn-i gurap,  
Bağ-ı hüsnün gülşeninde, menzilim oldu turap,

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<sup>47</sup> Şükrü Elçin, *Gevherî Divânı*, Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, Ankara, 1984, p. 556.

<sup>48</sup> I.e. have not shown up.

Dahi taze tıfl iken, ettin gönül şehrin harap,  
Gün gelir, bir zalim ve bîdât olursun akibet!

Der Seyyahî, hun-i didem akmadadır dembedem,  
Deldi bağrım kâh hasret, kâh firkat, kâh gam,  
Bana cefa ettiğin, bilmem diyem? ey gonce fem!  
Öğredir çarh-ı felek, üstat olursun akibet!<sup>49</sup>

(Filling a cup with nectar,<sup>50</sup> hey, fairy, you are fleeing (by drinking),  
Putting their head in the arena of love, they dance according to the saz,  
Even now you haven't left a lover alive with your coquetry.  
I fear that one of your dimples will be the executioner, fate!

You showed your face your rose garden [that is] your raven-like eyes,  
In your beautiful rose garden, my habitation became hubris (in comparison),  
When you were still a child, you destroyed the city of your heart,  
One day you will become an unjust tyrant, fate!

Say, Seyyahi, blood is flowing every moment from my eyes,  
It pierced my bosom, either craving, or separation, or regret.  
Shall I say that I don't know your torment against me? Hey, bulb-mouthed One!  
The wheel of fate teaches, you will be the master, fate!)

It is apparent that the setting of the beloved's departure and the agony it causes are shared by both. The much free word order and frequent usage of Persian words, set-phrases and ezafe construction are also features the two hold in common. According to published sources, Seyyahi's songs were written in the Arabic script for Ottoman Turkish. As such, their language and style are distinctly different from the Armeno-Turkish songs analyzed in Chapter 4, in which the native Turkish word order (subject-object-verb, attributes before the attributed, etc.) is largely observed. Thus, while Persian words occur frequently, the use of the Persian ezafe construction is limited to

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<sup>49</sup> Bayrak, 2005, p. 628.

<sup>50</sup> Or "drinking a cup", since *nuş eylemek* can mean either "to fill with nectar" or simply "to drink".

set-phrases in most cases.

Apart from language and formal issues, since divan literature itself is under heavy Persian influence, it is quite difficult to distinguish from which tradition a certain motif or style may have been borrowed by the bardic tradition. All these rhetorical or stylistic issues have been discussed in reviewing Persian influence.

Section 2 Sayat`-Nova, the Armenian *ašuġ* tradition of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, and the medieval Armenian lyric tradition (*taġasac`ut`iwn*)

Taġ is a very general name given to the standard type of medieval Armenian lyrical poem written in isosyllabic prosodies developed from the seventh century. The poet composing a taġ is called a *taġasac`*, and the poetry *taġasac`ut`iwn*. According to Varag Nersisyan, taġ is not a genre with a strict definition of its form and content. In contrast, any lyrical work composed in a certain rhythmic form can be called a taġ in medieval Armenian literature.<sup>51</sup> Rhyme was a much older feature of the Armenian oral tradition which became a fixed characteristic of literate poetry from the works of Grigor Magistros in the eleventh century on the basis of Arabic influence, while later the impact of Turkic folk meters is discernible. Taġ composition was fairly consistent until the early nineteenth century, and hence was actively pursued during Sayat`-Nova's lifetime. Having received an Armenian education, Sayat`-Nova and other Early Modern Armenian *ašuġs* could not be unfamiliar with the *taġasac`ut`iwn* tradition. Before

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<sup>51</sup> Varag Nersisyan, Henrik Baxĉ`inyan ed., *Hay mijnadaryan grakanut`yan žanrer*, Haykakan SSH GA Hratarakch`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1984, p. 199.

Sayat`-Nova, ašuf Yart`un Ōfli of Č`arbaġ in central Iran even has a song in eight-syllable quatrains written in classical Armenian, which is very similar formally to the taġ.<sup>52</sup>

Aspects of bardic prosody, rhyme scheme, and figures of speech have been treated in previous chapters. One finding from that discussion relates to the length of some Armenian ašuf's love songs. The norm for bardic love songs in Turkic and Armenian is four stanzas, however certain exponents like Yart`un Ōfli and Sayat`-Nova regularly employ five. Granted that taġs often exceed twenty lines and are therefore longer than Turkic folk songs consisting of three to four four-line verses and Persian ghazals, and bearing in mind that both Yart`un Ōfli and Sayat`-Nova had an educational background in Armenian, one factor behind their longer verse structure may be the influence from the taġasac`ut`iwn. Similarly, as lines in taġ poems often extend to fifteen or sixteen syllables, this may also be a factor in Sayat`-Nova's preference for this type of line in contrast to bardic norms.

Based on Nersisyan's conclusion, other scholars' opinions, and my own reading, the major themes of taġasac`ut`iwn are:<sup>53</sup>

Panegyric (govest)

Paraenesis (xrat)

Elegy (oġb)

Vituperation (parsav)

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<sup>52</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 244-245.

<sup>53</sup> Largely based on Nersisyan and Baxč`inyan, 1984, p.203.

Entreaty (aġersank`)

Complaint (gangat)

Homelessness (antuni) or economic emigration (pandxtut`iwn)

Secular feast or celebration (uraxut`iwn mardkanc`)

From the listing of the major themes in the bardic tradition in Chapter 3 it is obvious that all these feature in the Armenian ašuġ tradition as well. However, except for the typically Armenian theme of the antuni or pandxtut`iwn, thematic parallels alone do not necessarily establish a definite interconnection or link. Consequently, we must pursue our examination at the level of more specific detail.

Nersisyan and other scholars have concluded three major topics under praise: religious, praise of celebrated figures, and praise of female beauty.<sup>54</sup> The first two are very uncommon in Armenian ašuġ songs. I have encountered only one example of the second type, Šamč`i Melk`ō's *Ov srbazan Yosep` minj kat`uġikus* ("Oh Most Reverend Joseph our Catholicos").<sup>55</sup> Meanwhile, Sayat`-Nova composed a song in praise of a church, the Surb Geōrg church of Muġni.<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, though the theme is religious, the bard's treatment focuses on the magnificence of the architecture of the shrine without any biblical or theological reference. Such eulogies are also attested in certain Early Modern taġs like that of Vardan of Caffa (Vardan Kafac`i, 1615-1712) on the Monastery of the Holy Cross in the Crimea and a taġ Nersēs Mokac`i (c.1575-1625) in praise of the founders of the Mec Anapat Monastery<sup>57</sup> that includes a description of its

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<sup>54</sup> Based on Nersisyan and Baxč`inyan, 1984, pp. 206-223.

<sup>55</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 285.

<sup>56</sup> Arm. song No. 56.

<sup>57</sup> Hasmik Sahakyan, *Uš mijnadari hay banasteġcut`yunġ (XVI-XVII dd.)*, Haykakan SSH GA

architecture. Thus, a precedent existed for this sort of work in the taġ tradition. At the same time, I have not encountered any parallel to Sayat`-Nova's song in praise of architecture among other Early Modern bards.

Meanwhile, praise of female beauty represents the most popular theme of secular ašuf songs. Thus, while Sayat`-Nova's ardent, sober, yet definitely melancholy style is rarely attested among panegyric taġs, since such melancholy belongs more directly to the genre of complaint, affinities exist between taġs and ašuf songs on this theme. In particular, the more detailed description of the physical attributes of female beauty alluded to several times above, not only by Sayat`-Nova but Łul Yovhannēs at least<sup>58</sup>, which is much more comprehensive than in Turkic bardic songs, encompassing questions of the belle's grace of movement and good nature may have originated under the influence of taġasac`ut`iwn, since they already feature in compositions of the 10<sup>th</sup> century by figures like Grigor Narekac`I, in whose *Taġ ekelec`woy* (Poem on the Church) the panegyric of female beauty is employed as a trope for the Church.<sup>59</sup>

In contrast to love, other subjects are much less attested in bardic songs from the Early Modern period. Among Armenian ašufs, the theme of moral paraenesis occupies second place in frequency after love. With regard to format, most taġs and ašuf songs are similar to each other, since they are written either in the first person, in which the poet engages

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Hratarakč`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1975, vol. II, text: pp. 168-170, and short biography of the author, p. 746. For Nersēs Mokac`I's poem, see A. Doluxanyan: *Nerses Mokats`i: banasteġcut`yunner*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakč`utyun, Yerevan, 1975, pp. 44-63.

<sup>58</sup> His long work, starting with the line *Goveli hōsn u ġamald* "Your commendable beauty" (Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 167-169), includes almost all the physical attributes commented upon in praise of female beauty.

<sup>59</sup> Armine K`yoškeryan, *Grigor Narekac`i: taler ev ganjer*, Haykakan SSH GA Hratarakč`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1981, pp. 120-122.

the audience in a dialogue, or in the third person, in which case the writer includes a self-reference only in the takhalluṣ in the last stanza does the taḥṣac<sup>60</sup> or aṣuḥ refer to himself. However, in two of Sayat'-Nova's Armenian songs (Nos. 36 and 43), the poet speaks directly to himself (one to the "heart" and the other calling himself by his professional name). As for his Azeri songs, in contrast, their style, including vocabulary, do not differ much from Turkic bardic songs of the same category, except for the "xat'ayi" songs, whose genre invariably requires a praise of Shah Ismail Safavi Khaṭā'ī.

Though listed by Nersisyan as the last major theme in taḥṣ, the genre of complaint nevertheless occupies significant space in both taḥṣac'ut'iwn and the bardic tradition, especially as it incorporates the lover's complaint to the beloved, either for her departure or her unavailability. Outside that, one of the two other major topics in taḥṣ under this theme, the penitential lament about one's shortcomings is perhaps not attested in aṣuḥ songs. Nevertheless, the Isfahani aṣuḥ Łul Yovhannēs has a song lamenting an unfortunate marriage.<sup>61</sup>

The last major topic of lament, social injustice and inequality, is attested from Sayat'-Nova's famous *Aṣḥarumēs mē p'anjara ē* ("My world is a prison"), Łul Ēgaz's *Č'ka dard imac'oI* ("There is none who knows pain"),<sup>62</sup> and Azeri aşiq Abbas Tufarğanlı's *Bəyənəmz* ("Unlovable"),<sup>63</sup> though it is not very widespread among bards. In *Aṣḥarumēs mē p'anjara ē*, composed towards the end of his career as a court poet,

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<sup>60</sup> The takhalluṣ becomes increasingly popular in taḥṣ from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, as witnessed by Frik, Yovhannēs T'lkurac'I, and Kostandin Erzncac'i.

<sup>61</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 202-203.

<sup>62</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 77-79.

<sup>63</sup> Abbas Tufarğanlı, *72 şe'r*, p. 9.

Sayat`-Nova is sober yet very depressed, due to his deep desperation. The emotion and adept usage of figures of speech in this song is unique among all the complaints of the Early Modern period. Another secondary aspect of the genre is Sayat`-Nova's Azeri songs lamenting the ephemerality of this world,<sup>64</sup> a topic attested in other Azeri aşığıs' works,<sup>65</sup> while in Armenian songs, not even Sayat`-Nova, but only Lul Yovhannēs bemoans the transience of this world.<sup>66</sup>

Nersisyan lists vituperation as next to eulogy in importance, but, based my reading, does not appear to have a high profile in either tařasac`ut`iwn or the bardic tradition, judging by numbers alone, as also admitted by Nersisyan.<sup>67</sup> In both tař and ařul compositions, some handlings of this theme involve satire, such as Martiros Łrimec`i's vituperation on the priest Davit` (Dawit` Eric`u gorceal ř`arik`n ē<sup>68</sup>) or some by Nařař Yovnat`an,<sup>69</sup> while řamř`i-Melk`ō's works are considered as pure satire.<sup>70</sup> These include a song attacking a certain Ařak`il from Tarawri,<sup>71</sup> or his neighbor Xaraz Ali, a fraudulent artisan who defrauded Melk`ō of some money.<sup>72</sup> However, while Sayat`-Nova may reject injustice, as in *Ařxaruměs mē paņřara ē*, or a certain person, such as

<sup>64</sup> Azeri songs No. 97, No. 101, and No. 107.

<sup>65</sup> Qurbani, Kazımov, 1990, p. 124.

<sup>66</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 176, 178, 208, 212 (variant of 208).

<sup>67</sup> Nersisyan and Baxř`inyan, 1984, p. 226.

<sup>68</sup> Artařes Martirosyan, *Martiros Łrimec`i: usumnasirut`yunner ev bnagrer*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakř`utyun, Yerevan, 1958, pp. 93-96.

<sup>69</sup> Nersisyan and Baxř`inyan, 1984, p. 230 and Sahakyan, 1961, p. 60. Since in Nersisyan, the single author of this chapter's list of Nařař Yovnat`an's blames and Sahakyan's list of his satirical songs, there are overlapping titles like *Govasanut`iwn Erewanay k`alak`in* "Ode to the city of Yerevan" (Asatur Mnac`akanyan, řuřanik Nazaryan, ed., *Nařař Hovnat`an: banasteřcut`yunner*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakř`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1951, pp. 99-100) and *Otanawor I veray řahvertunc` Tēr Abrahamin* "Verse on Fr. Abraham of řahverti" (Mnac`akanyan and Nazaryan, 1951, pp. 111-115). At least these two should be regarded belonging to the vituperative-satirical genre.

<sup>70</sup> Levon Melik`set`-Bek, *řamř`i-Melk`on ev nra hayeren xařerě*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakř`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1958, pp. 24-25 and Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 59-63.

<sup>71</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 271-274, with a variant.

<sup>72</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 281-282, 303.



Georgian Catholicos Antoni I who is addressed in the poet's only song of this kind.<sup>73</sup>

Vituperation is not a common theme in early modern Turkic aşık/aşiq composition either. From the period under examination, I have observed only a few vituperative songs, e.g., one by Azeri aşiq Qurbani against a certain unnamed vizier,<sup>74</sup> which borders on the genre of curse, and aşiq Valəh's *Mollalar* (The Mullahs),<sup>75</sup> which is more satirical.

The four remaining major themes are even rarer overall, if we discount the motif of entreating the beloved, which is a cliché of compositions on love. Nevertheless, though virtually non-existent in works of Turkic bards', elegies on disasters befalling cities or regions after battle or earthquake represent an extensive tradition in Armenian *tafasac'ut'iwn* and are periodically attested in the works of Armenian *aşuġ* work, suggesting a continuity in the tradition. Examples include the Isfahani *aşuġ* Baġer Ōġi's songs on the fate of New Julfa after the fall of the Safavids<sup>76</sup> and Safar Ōġi's song about an earthquake that damaged Yerevan in 1679.<sup>77</sup> Although Sayat'-Nova has left no elegy, he is the only *aşuġ* from that period who composed in the genre of entreaty, i.e. his famous *Dun ēn glxēn imastun is* "Thou art profoundly wise."

Of the minor themes in *tafasac'ut'iwn* Nersisyan topics such as exegesis (*meknabanut'iwn*) and curse (*aneck'*) are not attested from *aşuġ* works, while history (*patmut'iwn*) is represented by *aşuġ*s, since elegies on events are naturally encompassed

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<sup>73</sup> Georgian song No. 29.

<sup>74</sup> Qurbani, Kazimov, 1990, p. 49.

<sup>75</sup> Axundov, Sakaoğlu et al. 1985, p. 74.

<sup>76</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 104-115.

<sup>77</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 355-356.

within it, while some bards possess songs on their personal experience as, for example, Isfahan ašuf Łul Arzuni's *Xať i veray Kalkat`ay* "Song on Kolkata,"<sup>78</sup> though these topics were not treated by Sayat`-Nova. Meanwhile, as indicated above, the topic of homelessness (*antuni*) and economic emigration (*pandxtut`iwn*), though largely absent in Turkic bardic literature, is widely represented in both Armenian *taťasac`ut`iwn* and ašuf songs, again suggesting interaction between those two literary strata.

The final issue under discussion in this section is the employment of allegory in Early Modern *taťasac`ut`iwn* and the ašuf tradition, particularly in the works of Sayat`-Nova. In this regard, the most important motif is undoubtedly the rose and nightingale. As discussed in previous chapters, this motif entered the *taťasac`ut`iwn* tradition from Persian poetry in the thirteenth century and grew in popularity with poets over the next two or three centuries, during which it developed a series of Armenian Christian variants.<sup>79</sup> In subsequent centuries, i.e. the Early Modern period, it was still quite popular in the *taťasac`ut`iwn* tradition, but as its heyday had passed, no further innovations were forthcoming.

The motif is also popular among ašufs as well, yet with a much less sophisticated application. In addition, the bards employed it merely as a vehicle for secular love song, with fewer mystic connotations than in either the Sufi or elevated Christian literary traditions. Thus, a number of Early Modern bards handle the motif in its most basic forms either as a dialogue between the rose (beloved) and the nightingale (lover) or a

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<sup>78</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, pp. 101-102.

<sup>79</sup> Nersisyan and Baxč`inyan, 1984, pp. 248-250.

description of the nightingale's loss of, and/or yearning, and/or searching for the rose. The latter is exemplified by K'ič'ik'-Nova's two songs in a tone of grief and unrequited love,<sup>80</sup> while the former type is attested by Sayat'-Nova's song from Ioane's manuscript,<sup>81</sup> in which the motif is employed as an allegory for the "I" in the last stanza. Meanwhile, in the Davt'ar, there is an address from the "I" who lost his love to the nightingale who, in parallel, has lost its rose,<sup>82</sup> expressing "my" frustration by comparing the two lovers' situation. In contrast, Sayat'-Nova's only Azeri song in the Davt'ar composed fully on the rose and nightingale motif seems incomplete, with only two stanzas.<sup>83</sup> Many other ašufs of this period merely alluded to the motif in single tropes in their love songs. Granted the widespread and enduring employment of the motif in Armenian tašasac'ut'iwn, it is possible that it acted as an intermediary for the development of the motif in ašuf songs beyond the matrix provided by the bardic tradition.

Another very popular motif in Sufi allegorical songs is the moth (or butterfly) and flame (or candle, light), particularly in symbolizing the concept of self-annihilation in the uniting completely with the divine beloved. Yet, as this procedure contravenes the Judeo-Christian tradition, the motif was never integrated into Armenian Christian didactic literature. Similarly, though Sayat'-Nova used the image of butterfly and candle at least in Azeri songs Nos. 7, 17, 24, 33, 46, 60, 85, 90, 102 and 102 as a trope for fervent secular love, he never used it in his Armenian songs. Moreover, in the oeuvre

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<sup>80</sup> Sahakyan, 1961, pp.319-321.

<sup>81</sup> Armenian songs, appendix A, No. 5 (52 by accumulation).

<sup>82</sup> Armenian song No. 7.

<sup>83</sup> Azeri song No. 109, or No. 1 in Baxč'inyan's Appendix A, with endnote on p. 498.

of other Early Modern Armenian *ašul* the motif is not present even as a trope.

By way of preliminary conclusions we may note that in certain formal issues such as line length and number of stanzas, as well as at the level of themes such as elegy and the plight of the economic migrant, the Armenian elevated poetic tradition may be a factor in impacting *ašul* composition. Similarly, it may have served as the intermediary in transmitting other themes such as the rose and nightingale that originated from a Persian matrix. Judging from Yart'un Ōili's competence in Classical Armenian and the number of songs featuring a debate motif, it might be argued that he stands even closer to the *tašasac`ut`iwn* tradition than Sayat`-Nova, since he also composed in quite sound classical Armenian. In contrast, even in his days of exile as a clerk, writing colophons in Classical Armenian, Sayat`-Nova still made spelling mistakes.<sup>84</sup>

Section 3 Sayat`-Nova, the Armenian *ašul* tradition of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, and the medieval Georgian lyric tradition

In discussing the general features of Sayat`-Nova's Georgian songs, I attempt to follow the structure already established in Chapter 3, Section 3 and Chapter 4, Section 2. However, the lack of other contemporary *ašuls* composing in Georgian renders any comparative treatment out of the question.

Overall, the *ašul*/*ašik* tradition is formally distant from the classical Georgian poetic tradition, in that it employs Turkic folk prosodies, distinct from medieval

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<sup>84</sup> Dowsett, 1997, pp. 22-24.

Georgian prosodies such as the sixteen-syllable line *šairi* employed in romance.<sup>85</sup> The only clear interaction between Georgian poetry and Armenian *aşu* songs seems to be the genre *muxammaz/muxambazi* (five-line stanza). Georgian scholars agree that this form passed into Georgian literature by means of the Armenian majority population of the capital Tiflis, among whom it was popular. This is confirmed from chauvinist comments by the nineteenth-century aristocratic poet Vakhtang Orbeliani: “I do not like the *muxambazi* style—*kinto* style, *bazaar* style.”<sup>86</sup> The remark identifies the form with the *kintos* (a sort of small trader) associated with the market.<sup>87</sup>

After Davit` Guramišvili (1705-1792)<sup>88</sup> and Sayat`-Nova, Besiki (born as Besarion Gabašvili, 1750-1791) was the last major poet writing in Georgian in the eighteenth century, succeeding Sayat`-Nova in serving at the Kartli-Kakheti court. In this connection, it is often argued that Besiki’s early style is under Sayat`-Nova’s influence.<sup>89</sup> But the only parallel study of the two writers that I have encountered was conducted by Paruyr Muradyan. It contrasts their expulsion from Tiflis, provides a short comment on Besiki’s genres, and offers a brief selection of quotations from Sayat`-Nova’s and Besiki’s *muxammaz/muxambazi* compositions to illustrate generic and stylistic parallels between them.<sup>90</sup> Muradyan argues that Besiki used six genres and

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<sup>85</sup> For this prosody, see Donald Rayfield: *The literature of Georgia: a history*, 3<sup>rd</sup> revised edition, Garnett Press, London, 2010, pp. 91-92.

<sup>86</sup> As quoted from Muradyan, 1963, p.40.

<sup>87</sup> For reference to them, see Ioseb Grišašvili; Hrač`ya Bayramyan, Matin K`aramyan trans., *Hin Tiflisi grakan Bohemě* (Dzveli Tbilisis literaturuli bohema), Merani, Tbilisi, 1989, pp. 12-17.

<sup>88</sup> Rayfield, 2010, pp. 128-133.

<sup>89</sup> Rayfield, 2010, pp. 134-135.

<sup>90</sup> Paruyr Muradyan, *Sayat`-Novan ěst vrac`akan albyurneri: banasirakan prptumner ev nyut`er*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakč`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1963, pp. 38-42. However, there is no indication of Sayat Nova’s song numbers and original languages at all. I cannot find much similarity in these examples based on Muradyan’s Armenian translation either.)

prosodies already employed by Sayat`-Nova (bayat`i, ĩap`ia, mustazad, t`axmis,<sup>91</sup> muxambaz and t`ejlis<sup>92</sup>), among which the muxambaz, mustazad and bayat`i are further confirmed by the scholar Korneli Kekelize<sup>93</sup>. In the collection of Besiki's works accessible to me, out of a total of sixty works,<sup>94</sup> there are around fifteen featuring five-line stanzas, i.e., about a quarter. In comparison, that prosody accounts for 26 out of 68 of Sayat`-Nova's Armenian songs and 14 out of his 38 Georgian songs.<sup>95</sup> However, there are two other prosodic issues in Besiki's songs that Muradyan did not refer to. The first is the use of fourteen-syllable line. According to scholars,<sup>96</sup> this form of Georgian poetry did not start with Besiki, but became popular after him in the nineteenth century and nicknamed "Besikuri", i.e., the Besikian form. Among Besiki's poems, works in fourteen-syllable lines (four-, five- or six-line stanza) amount to 12,<sup>97</sup> i.e. a fifth of the total. Meanwhile, according to Levonyan, the fourteen-syllable line is a form of muxammaz,<sup>98</sup> while the fourteen-syllable 5-4-5 trimeter is standard for the 4-line stanza ĩalandari,<sup>99</sup> to which Besiki's only fourteen-syllable four-line poem seems to conform.<sup>100</sup> The second issue is eleven-syllable lines. According to Gac`erelia, this form was first introduced into Georgian poetry by Davit` Guramišvili, but was systematically used by Sayat`-Nova and later by Besiki. In the collection, songs in four-

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<sup>91</sup> According to its name in Arabic, this is an extension of couplets into five-line stanzas.

<sup>92</sup> This should be a T`ejnis.

<sup>93</sup> Muradyan, 1963, p. 39, text and note 13.

<sup>94</sup> Since there might be fragment(s) and/or variant(s), this number is not accurate.

<sup>95</sup> Sayat`-Nova's numbers are based on Levonyan, p. 88.

<sup>96</sup> All the conclusions here derive from email exchange with Georgian literary scholar Merab Ghaghanidze (August 27<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> 2015). He, in turn, partly paraphrased Akaki Gac`erelia's *K`art`uli klasikuri lek'si: maxvili, ritmi, rit`ma da strop`i*, Sabčot'a Mcerali, Tbilisi, 1953, pp. 170-210.

<sup>97</sup> 4-line stanza only 1; 5-line stanza 8; 6-line stanza 3.

<sup>98</sup> Levonyan, 1944, p. 56.

<sup>99</sup> Levonyan, 1944, p. 58.

<sup>100</sup> Besiki, 1962, p. 34.

line stanzas of eleven-syllable lines comprise 11 poems out of the 60, i.e. around a fifth of the total. Since this is the standard format of *foşma*.<sup>101</sup> it is highly probable that this form is also imported from *aşuî* literature. Prosodies aside, *Besiki* also use the figure of *jinās*,<sup>102</sup> which might be assumed as a further influence from the *aşuî* tradition. Naturally, these initial findings require a more thorough investigation. Moreover, even if *Besiki* reveals the impact of the bardic tradition, this was not necessarily transmitted by means of his acquaintance with Sayat`-Nova's works. When the latter was expelled from the Georgian court in 1759, *Besiki* was only an eight- or nine-year old boy. However, it is quite possible that he heard Sayat`-Nova's songs in Tiflis or Telavi.

By way of general conclusion, we may state the following. Acknowledged as the most prestigious poetical tradition in Persianate countries in the medieval and Early Modern periods, Classical Persian poetry influenced almost every elevated and popular literary tradition in the area to a greater or lesser degree, including the *aşık/aşuî/aşiq* tradition. This influence on the bardic mainstream in Turkic could be direct, but especially indirect, mediated through classical Azeri and Ottoman Divan poetry. In addition to these elevated intermediaries, it is also important to consider the possible role of “pre-*aşık/aşiq*” Turkic poets like the thirteenth century figure Yunus Emre in the Near East before the *aşık/aşiq* tradition came into existence, some of whom had already accepted Persian influence as well. These links are suggested by certain core similarities

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<sup>101</sup> Levonyan, 1944, pp. 54-55.

<sup>102</sup> *Besiki*, 1962, pp. 52-54.

witnessed between the above traditions and bardic composition, though much of the background to this hypothesis requires further, more in-depth investigation.

In addition to Persian influence via Turkic traditions, Christian Armenian bards were also open to its mediation through Armenian *tałasac`ut`iwn* and, for those in Tiflis, perhaps even classical Georgian poetry. Furthermore, it is suggested that their compositions bear the impact of Classical Armenian poetry in regard to a number of characteristics where the latter diverges from both the elevated Persian and Turkic *aşık/aşıq* traditions.



## Chapter 6

### Sayat`-Nova's Posthumous Status as a Cultural Icon

This concluding chapter treats the pattern of reception of Sayat`-Nova the poet and his works both in the academic and cultural sphere as well as manifestations of Sayat`-Nova's more popular appeal to Armenians in the Republic of Armenia and worldwide Diaspora as well as to the Transcaucasian public. It will be argued that the trajectory of this reception mirrors important sociopolitical developments in the region's history over the last three centuries.

#### Section 1 Romantic Nationalism: 1840s-1880s

The period between 1795, the likely year of Sayat`-Nova's death in Tiflis<sup>1</sup>, and 1963, just before the two-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of his birth, a milestone massively celebrated across the Soviet Union, coincided with major political changes in Southern Caucasia. These nearly 170 years mark the first phase of the process, witnessing the renewal of interest in Sayat`-Nova and his poetic output and a rise in his public status that further peaked in the 1960s. The tradition of Sayat`-Nova studies started about half a century after the poet's death and became more fully established

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<sup>1</sup> Axverdean reported that the bard had died in Tiflis in 1795 in his *Sayeat`-Nōvay*, pp. XII-XIII, on the basis of information by those who buried him, and this has been widely accepted in Armenology. However, a number of Kartvelologists list the date as 1801 or later according to the record in prince Ioane Bagrationi's *Kalmasoba*, on which, see, for example, Alek`sandr Baramiže and Davit` Gamezardašvili, *Georgian literature*, Tbilisi University Press, Tbilisi, 1968, p. 43, and Rayfield, 2010, p. 133. Dowsett's refutation of the latter view is robust, though he does not give much support to 1795 either. See Dowsett, 1997, pp. 35-45.

by the early 1920s. Previously, most of the research stemmed from the efforts of isolated individuals motivated by personal interest alone, as we shall observe in the case of the turn of the century Armenian poet Hovhannes T`umanyan.

Sayat`-Nova studies begin with Gēorg Axverdean in the 1840s before the introduction of a modern approach to scholarship in South Caucasia. At that time, Sayat`-Nova's songs were sung only in Tiflis, and were slowly falling into obscurity. A talented aristocrat, Gēorg Axverdean received a proper Russian education at the Tiflis Gymnasium before continuing his studies at the Lazarian Institute in Moscow and subsequently Moscow University. He was among the first generation of university-educated Armenian and South Caucasian intellectuals, who imbibed modern science and scholarship and brought literary romanticism and romantic nationalism to their homeland. Romantic nationalism venerates the folk and emphasizes folk language and literature as the carriers of the nation's history and soul.<sup>2</sup> Investigating Armenian dialects, collecting Armenian folk literature, employing vernacular Armenian, or *ašxarabar*, as a vehicle for written literature like Xaç`atur Abovean,<sup>3</sup> he differed only in the means he used to realize those ideals. While Abovean wrote the first modern novel, *Wounds of Armenia*, and his other works in the dialect of his birthplace K`anak`eř, Axverdean set out to collect Armenian folklore and ašuř songs, which he transcribed in the Tiflis dialect, while maintaining a

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<sup>2</sup> See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006, pp. 88-109.

<sup>3</sup> For Axverdean's education, see Gevorg Madoyan, *Gevorg Axverdyan*, Hayastan Hratarakč`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1969, pp. 8-11, for his view on language, see *ibid.*, pp. 97-100, and, for his view on literature, see pp. 68-72. For Abovean's view on both, see H. Muradyan's chapter on him in: *Hay nor grakanut`yan patmut`yun*, vol. 1, Yerevan, 1962, pp. 411-415.

particular interest in the speech of Tarōn-Turuberan, the region west of Lake Van<sup>4</sup> and home of St. Maštoc`, the inventor of Armenian alphabet.<sup>5</sup> Axverdean published two volumes (the second, posthumously) of Armenian ašuġ songs under the title *Gusank`*.<sup>6</sup> The latter tome presented a variety of materials, but his first volume was dedicated exclusively to Sayat`-Nova, the most productive and accomplished Tiflis Armenian ašuġ.<sup>7</sup> In the opening of his preface to the first printed collection of Sayat`-Nova's works, Axverdean explains at length his motivation for gathering Armenian ašuġ and popular songs:

Ku'li mē k`ani tari hawakum em kendani aġbiwric` hanac kendani niwt`er žamanakacic` Hay azgi patmut`ean hamar. Hawak`ēlis unēi mišt ač`k`i taks xndirn, t`ē dēsudēn ōtar azgeru mēj bnakac Hayern inč`pēs ēn jewac`rel iranc` keank`n mnalov aylazgi azdec`ut`ean takn, u amēn teġ heštut`eamb ver aġnelov nranc` sovorut`iwnnēr, erbemn lezun ēl yaytnum en ardeōk` iranc` kenc`aġavarwt`ēnum ēnpēs bun nšanner, ork` goyac`num ēlin azgi sep`akanut`iwnn u šnorhk`n. Nayelov ēs džwaraluyc xndrun, orn or pahanġum ē ews tirōġ azgeru bun azgaynut`ēni čišd teġekanaln, law tesnum ēi or amēnic` aġaġ k`nnelun mēk žoġovrdi xōsac lezun ē,...Ēs mtk`ov žoġovum ēi hayerēn Aġak, Aġac, Vičakaxaġ, u amēn tesak xaġer, manawand azgayin ergič`neru kam Ašuġneru ptuġnēr, orn or pahpanel ē azgn awēl pakas t`ē awandut`ēnov, t`ē grov, oroy č``imanalēn šat zrkank` e krel oġormuk Hayastann.<sup>8</sup>

(For a few years I have been collecting living materials from living sources for a contemporary history of the Armenian nation. While collecting, I had a question continually before my eyes as to how Armenians had given a distinct shape to their lives, granted that they lived all over among foreign nations under the influence of other peoples, everywhere adopting their customs and sometimes their language with ease. Do they reveal in their way of life such basic signs that

<sup>4</sup> Roughly corresponding to the current Turkish Province of Muş, plus much of the Bitlis Province.

<sup>5</sup> Madoyan, 1969, pp. 98-99.

<sup>6</sup> Gēorg Axverdean, *Gusank`, B, Hay ašuġnerč*, Azgagrakan Handēs ed., Aragatip Mnac`akan Martiroseanc`, Tiflis, 1903.

<sup>7</sup> For the details of his collection of the Davt`ar, its edition and publication, see Madoyan, 1969, pp. 72-89.

<sup>8</sup> Axverdean, 1852, preface, p. I.

manifest a nation's individuality and aptitude? Considering such a difficult problem, which also requires precise information on the ruling nations' basic national characteristics, I saw clearly that above all it is through examining a people's spoken language. ... With this in mind, I was collecting Armenian fables, proverbs, fortune telling, and all kinds of songs, especially the products of national singers or *ašuġs*, which have saved the nation more or less through oral tradition or writing, from the ignorance of which lamentable Armenia has borne much deprivation.)

Throughout the work he rejects the idea that Armenians lack a poetic sense expressed in versified or lively songs.<sup>9</sup> To counter the accusation he naturally introduces Sayat'-Nova. As he noted in the preface, when talking about Sayat'-Nova, older people left the following compassionate comment:

K`ani angam kardalis sra xaġern hariwr tarekan paġawneru aġġewn, uzelow hrapurac sranc` t`mrac yišoġut`iwnn durekan hnuc` banerov, hanem nranc`ic` mē tefekut`iwn mer ergċ`i vra, mišt lsel em cngan talov asac xosk`ern, “Ēt xō mir Sayeat`-Novu xaġn ē, vay k`i Sayeat`-Nova, inċ` zofir is šanc` tēwi.”<sup>10</sup>

(Declaiming his songs a few times before hundred-year old grannies, hoping to stir their faded memory with lovable old things so as to elicit from them information about our singer, I have always heard these words said kneeling, “This is indeed our Sayat'-Nova's song. Alas for you, Sayat'-Nova, how much effort you gave to the dogs!”)

Axverdean's contribution to Armenian folk literature studies should not be underestimated, and his status as the first scholar of Sayat'-Nova is undeniable. Yet in his time, when modern scholarship still struggled to establish itself in Southern Caucasia, it is hardly possible to state that he established the field of Sayat'-Nova

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<sup>9</sup> Axverdean, 1852, preface, p. II

<sup>10</sup> Axverdean, 1852, preface, p. XIII

studies, which became firmly rooted in the next generation. In fact, in the thirty-to-forty years following Axverdean, more Georgian scholars published works on Sayat`-Nova than their Armenian counterparts.<sup>11</sup>

## Section 2 Nationalism and Socialism: 1880s-1910s

The next major Armenian publications after Axverdean's emerged in the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century,<sup>12</sup> but for the most influential figure was Hovhannes T`umanyan who entered the realm of Sayat`-Nova studies in the 1910s. T`umanyan shared Axverdean's emphasis on "the people," but his nationalist approach was already nourished by an interest and love for folklore that had been cultivated from childhood in his home village of Dseġ in the Lori region. T`umanyan's composition in the Lori dialect about local village life and in imitation of its folklore and style amply attests to his dedication to traditional popular culture.<sup>13</sup> He had begun reading Sayat`-Nova's songs in second grade, around 1881 to 1883.<sup>14</sup> His later experiences as an Armenian in Tiflis probably brought him further occasions to hear about Sayat`-Nova and take pride in his fellowcountryman. In addition to this natural affinity, T`umanyan's humanistic and socialist standpoint against inequality and injustice made Sayat`-Nova's songs resonate with greater empathy.

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<sup>11</sup> Baxĉ`inyan, 1988, pp.7-8.

<sup>12</sup> For example, Gēorg Ter-Aġek`sandean's *Tiflizecoc` mtavor kyank`ġ*, Yovhannēs Martiroseanc`i tparan, Tiflis, 1885; as quoted from Baxĉ`inyan, 1988, p.7.

<sup>13</sup> For his childhood and compositions in a folkloric style, see Ėdvard Ĵrbařyan's chapter on him in: S.Sarinyan et al. ed.: *Hay nor grakanut`yan patmut`yun*, vol. 5, Yerevan, 1979, pp. 248,260-277, 298-305.

<sup>14</sup> Hovhannes T`umanyan: *Sayat`-Nova*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakĉ`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1963, p.78.

By this time Armenian public at large had nearly forgotten Sayat`-Nova,<sup>15</sup> granted that the studies of Axverdean and others on Sayat`-Nova were confined to scholarly circles and had not impacted the largely illiterate society.<sup>16</sup> Bearing this in mind, the fact that Sayat`-Nova's songs were still sung in Tiflis in T`umanyan's time and transcribed around his period evidences his once-tremendous popularity.<sup>17</sup>

T`umanyan's individual personal and ideological motives for studying Sayat`-Nova dovetail perfectly with the region's larger historical and political context. T`umanyan was already discussing the great bard with his companions in the 1890s and after 1900 in the *vernatun*, or Upper House, his salon where he would regularly hold gatherings with his friends, all of whom were celebrated Armenian or Tiflis figures.<sup>18</sup> However, his articles exclusively dedicated to Sayat`-Nova were delayed by his involvement in seeking to establish peace between the combatants in the Armeno-Tatar conflict of 1905-1907, partly provoked by the 1905 Russian Revolution, which inflicted heavy losses on both sides. As a humanist and social activist, T`umanyan's engaged in peace-making and humanitarian labors with cultural figures from every major nationality in Southern Caucasia, including the Tatars (later called Azerbaijanis) for which activities he was twice imprisoned by the Tsarist

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<sup>15</sup> See the memoirs of Derenik Demirčyan, Step'an Zoryan, Ĵalal Ter-Grigoryan, and Ioseb Grišašvili in M. AbeĴyani anvan Grakanut'yan Institut, Haykakan SSH Gitut'yunneri Akademia, L. Karapetyan, A. Inčikyan, P. Hakobyan, et al., *T`umanyaně žamanakakic`neri hušerum*, repr. Ėdit' Print, Yerevan, 2009, pp. 37, 108, 407, 662-663.

<sup>16</sup> According to Hovhannes Kostanyan, Axverdean's edition was rare to find in the 1900s, and only philologists could benefit from that edition. See *T`umanyaně žamanakakic`neri hušerum*, 2009, p. 464.

<sup>17</sup> During the 1890s in the *Vernatun* Sayat`-Nova's songs were sung by Nikol Afbalean. See Derenik Demirčyan's memoir, *T`umanyaně žamanakakic`neri hušerum*, 2009, p. 37.

<sup>18</sup> T`umanyan, 1963, p.79.

authorities.<sup>19</sup> As a result, all his articles on Sayat`-Nova were published in 1912 to 1917 after his release. Indeed, since Sayat`-Nova composed in the three major languages of Transcaucasia but displayed hardly any ethnic or religious prejudices, he was an appealing model for supporters of interethnic harmony. Indeed, T`umanyan's initiation of the events in Tiflis commemorating Sayat`-Nova, especially the now-traditional Festival of Roses (*Vardaton* in Armenian and *Vardoba* in Georgian), in 1914, confirms the poet's stature as a symbol of regional harmony.

According to contemporary opinion, 1913 marked the bicentennial of Sayat`-Nova's birth and hence provided the best occasion to renew public memory of him and at the same time to speak out for cooperation among different peoples, symbolized by his songs. Hovhannes T`umanyan was joined in this initiative by cultural figures of Tiflis like the Armenian landscape painter Gēorg Bašinĵaĵyan, the Georgian poet and scholar Ioseb Grišašvili, and the famed linguist and Caucasiologist Nikolai Marr. Yet T`umanyan's prominent social status and public appeal maintained his pre-eminence among them. Cultural figures from diverse ethnic groups in Southern Caucasia were invited to the events. Ašuf and sazandars in Tiflis, including the last major pre-revolutionary Armenian ašuf Haziri, performed at its various venues. Funds were successfully raised for the repair of Sayat`-Nova's tomb at the Armenian St. Gēorg Church in Tiflis, and an on-site monument in his honor was opened to the public on May 15, 1914, when the tradition of *Vardaton/Vardoba* also started. In response to T`umanyan's appeal, Tiflis citizens of different ethnicities,

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<sup>19</sup> Ĵrbašyan's chapter in: *Hay nor grakanut`yan patmut`yun*, vol. 5, Yerevan, 1979, p. 295.

ages, and occupations flocked to Sayat`-Nova's tomb with red roses—the “king of flowers” and Sayat`-Nova's favorite—in their hands as homage to the *aşuġ* and as a symbol of the day.<sup>20</sup> *Vardaton/Vardoba* remains a tradition in Tbilisi on the last Sunday of May.

Through a series of such activities later institutionalized, Hovhannes T`umanyan certainly succeeded not only in expanding Sayat`-Nova's visibility beyond scholarly circles and the traditional setting of Tiflis. Derenik Demirčyan holds that T`umanyan first introduced Sayat`-Nova into the school curriculum<sup>21</sup> and Hovhannes Kostanyan credits him with making the first published collection of Sayat`-Nova's songs widely accessible.<sup>22</sup>

### Section 3 Communism: 1920 to 1960

The first years of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic, established in 1920, coincided with the last years of Hovhannes T`umanyan, who passed away in 1923. At that time Eġiše Č`arenc`, the Armenian Bolshevik poet, chose Sayat`-Nova as his new source of inspiration between 1920 and 1921 and immediately began absorbing the bard's style, as is obvious in his collection *Taġaran* (*Songbook*):<sup>23</sup> At the opening of this small collection, Č`arenc` quotes Sayat`-Nova<sup>24</sup> and applies many of Sayat`-

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<sup>20</sup> T`umanyan, 1963, p. 82.

<sup>21</sup> *T`umanyanġ žamanakakic`neri huşerum*, 2009, p. 37.

<sup>22</sup> *T`umanyanġ žamanakakic`neri huşerum*, 2009, p. 464.

<sup>23</sup> For the corpus, see Haykakan SSR ġitut`yunneri Akademia, M. Abeġyani anvan Grakanut`yan Institut: Eġiše Č`arenc`: *Erkeri žoġovacu*, Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakč`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1962, vol. 1, pp. 219-247.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219. The quotation is taken from the first three lines of the last stanza of Sayat`-Nova's Armenian Song No. 18, with some variations. Compare Baxč`inyan, 1987, p. 34.



Nova's phrases, motifs, techniques, and even his Tiflis Armenian grammar in his poems. The first poem in the collection bears witness to his fascination "In my dream I saw Sayat'-Nova approach me, saz in one hand:"

Eraz tesa, Sayat'-Noven mots ēkav sazē jeṛin,  
Hri nman vaṛman ginu ōskejrac t'asē jeṛin,  
Nstec', anuš erger asav hin k'amanč'i masē jeṛin,  
Ēnpes asav, ases uner erknc'i almasē jeṛin.

U ēn ergin ōror-šoror, inč'pes huri, atlas u xas,  
Erazis meṛ gozaln ēkav ink'n ēl vaṛman k'aṭc'r eraz,  
Nazank' arav, Sayat'-Novi sirtē lc'rec' mirg u muraz,  
Kangnec'-mnac' demk'ic' k'ašac ōskekarac xasē jeṛin.

Nayec'-nayec' Sayat'-Noven, ampi nman txur mnac',  
Asav, "Č'arenc', ēs gozalic' srtis me hin mrmuṛ mnac',  
Sirts vaṛvec', moxir darjav ink'ē krak u hur mnac', --  
Du ēl nra govk'ē ara, or ga ōske mazē jeṛin.

Ēnpes asav Sayat'-Noven u ver kac'av, orpes gišer,  
Gnac' noric' txur u luṛ sirtē hazar muraz u ser,  
Erazn anc'av – du mnac'ir, patkerk'ē k'o mnac' luse,  
Mek ēl im xefē sirtē mnac' Sayat'-Novi sazē jeṛin.<sup>25</sup>

(In my dream I saw Sayat'-Nova approach me, saz in one hand,  
A gilt cup of fire-like burning wine in the other hand,  
He sat down, singing sweet songs with an old kamancha in his hand,  
Singing in such a way that you'd think he had heaven's diamond in his hand.

And with the lullaby-like song, with satin and silk, like a houri,  
The belle entered my dream, herself like a burning sweet dream,  
Coquettishly, she filled Sayat'-Nova's heart with fruit and desire,  
She stood still, in her hand the gold-sewn silk veil drawn from her face.

Sayat'-Nova stared again and again, remaining sad as a cloud,  
He said, "Č'arenc', an old burn remains in my heart from this belle,  
My heart burned, turned to ash; she remained fire and flame, --

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<sup>25</sup> Eḥše Č'arenc', 1962, pp. 225-226.

Do you also praise her, so her golden tresses come to your hand.

In this way Sayat`-Nova sang, and stood up like night,  
Again he went away, sad and silent, a thousand desires and loves in his heart,  
The dream passed – you remained, your image remained splendid,  
My poor heart, too, remained with Sayat`-Nova's saz in its hand.)<sup>26</sup>

Clearly Č`arenc` appropriates much from ašuġ literature the rhyme scheme (AAAA, BBBA, CCCA, DDDA), repeated words and phrases (*gozal*, *atlas u xas*), together with the dream motif. Moreover, he adopts Sayat`-Nova as his own master, who introduces him to the belle, implying that Č`arenc` regards himself as an ašuġ inspired by Sayat`-Nova, and continuing his inspired forerunner's tradition. Indeed, the whole *Taġaran* collection borrows from the ašuġ tradition in this manner down to the use of Tiflis dialectal forms.<sup>27</sup>

However, apart from this collection, poets of Č`arenc`'s generation, far from forming connections with the past, viewed themselves as forging a new unprecedented revolutionary aesthetic. Thus, at the same time he wrote *Taġaran*, Č`arenc` was also working on his novel *Erkir Nairi* (*Land of Nairi*), a trenchant critique of the outworkings of the nationalist cause in recent Armenian history. Meanwhile, in the year 1922, immediately after completing *Taġaran*, Č`arenc` formed a literary group called "The Three" with Azat Vštuni and Gevorg Abov, which radically rejected the cultural legacy of the past, though this was a passing phase in

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<sup>26</sup> My own translation, with reference to the artistic translation by Diana Der Hovanesian and Marzbed Margossian ed. and trans., Eghishe Charents, *Land of Fire: Selected Poems*, Ardis Publishers, Ann Arbor, MI, 1986, p. 40.

<sup>27</sup> For example, in Canto IV, Č`arenc` used *elim* "I shall be" instead of *linem* in modern standard Eastern Armenian. See Eliše Č`arenc`, 1962, p. 228.

his artistic development.<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, among the major pre-revolutionary scholars of Sayat`-Nova, T`umanyan and others passed away, while others, like Nikol Afbalyan, left the Soviet realm because of their political views. These expatriate scholars helped disseminate the name of Sayat`-Nova and advance Sayat`-Nova studies in the Diaspora, though Sayat`-Nova's origins in the eastern Armenian sphere and Tiflis idiom resulted in his remaining less-known in the Diaspora than in the Armenian Republic in the first half of the twentieth century since, apart from Iranian-Armenian communities, most of the Diaspora has Western Armenian roots, standard linguistic form, and builds on the Western Armenian literary tradition.

The relative freedom of the 1920s under Lenin's leadership gave way to the reimposition of censorship and more repressive centralized rule under Stalin in the next decade. The Great Purge (1936-1938) cost the lives of many intellectuals, including Ć`arenc`, and the most creative and productive years of others, like Gurgen Mahari. Control of expression emerged already in 1932 with the founding of the Union of Writers of the USSR, the only official writers' organization, and Socialist Realism was almost immediately proclaimed as the guiding principle of literary creation and later hailed as the paradigm for all the creative arts in the USSR. Its ideal of *partiinosť* (Party-mindedness), later interpreted as propagation of Party policy and ideology, together with a rigorous focus on contemporary events, greatly restricted writers' expression.<sup>29</sup> Literary studies of past eras were required to highlight the role

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<sup>28</sup> In 1926 did Ć`arenc` matured from his youthful radicalism to gain an openness to learning from past masters. On this, see Bardakjian, 2000, pp. 207-210.

<sup>29</sup> For details on Socialist Realism, see Victor Terras ed., *Handbook of Russian literature*, Yale University Press, New Heaven, CT, 1985, pp. 429-431.

of reliably “proto-proletariat” authors in pointing the way forward to the present age. Hence, the first publication of the pithy poems of the thirteenth century satirist Frik as “the most profound medieval Armenian secular author” provided an occasion for attacking the fathers of the Mkhtarist monastic congregation as “bourgeois footmen” attempting to obliterate Frik’s memory as part of their benighted clerical perspective,<sup>30</sup> though in fact, Frik’s satires are not as subversive and anti-religious as they were presented as being.<sup>31</sup> As for Sayat`-Nova, his secular aşuf identity easily invited the label of people’s artist, and the contents of his songs, e.g. his petition to King Erekle II or a lament on his own fate, seemed to offer a “complaint against injustice” and embrace the class struggle.

All these apparent Soviet virtues, along with his genuine artistic excellence, saved Sayat`-Nova from neglect or erasure from histories of Armenian literature of the period. As a result, his works were published in the 1930s and his anniversaries commemorated. In addition, the State Minstrel Ensemble of Soviet Armenia, established in 1927, bore his name,<sup>32</sup> while a music school founded in Yerevan in 1934 was renamed after him in 1944,<sup>33</sup> as was a street in Tbilisi.

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<sup>30</sup> HXSH Patmut`yan yev Grakanut`yan Institut, *Frik (žioIovacu)*, Petakan Hratarakč`ut`yun, Yerevan, 1937, preface, p. 7.

<sup>31</sup> S. Peter Cowe, “Models for the interpretation of medieval armenian poetry”, in J.J.S. Weitenberg ed., *New approaches to medieval Armenian language and literature*, Rodopi, 1995, pp. 43-44.

<sup>32</sup> <http://sayat-nova.org/sayat-nova-ashough-ensemble/> as retrieved on Jul. 30, 2015.

<sup>33</sup> [https://hy.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D5%8D%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%A1%D5%A9-%D5%86%D5%B8%D5%BE%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%AB\\_%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%BE%D5%A1%D5%B6\\_%D5%A5%D6%80%D5%A1%D5%AA%D5%B7%D5%BF%D5%A1%D5%AF%D5%A1%D5%B6\\_%D5%A4%D5%BA%D6%80%D5%B8%D6%81](https://hy.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D5%8D%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%A1%D5%A9-%D5%86%D5%B8%D5%BE%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%AB_%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%BE%D5%A1%D5%B6_%D5%A5%D6%80%D5%A1%D5%AA%D5%B7%D5%BF%D5%A1%D5%AF%D5%A1%D5%B6_%D5%A4%D5%BA%D6%80%D5%B8%D6%81) as retrieved on Jul. 30, 2015.

#### Section 4 “Friendship of Peoples”: the 1960s

After Khrushchev established himself in the Kremlin, the Thaw gained real traction, bringing a measure of political, economic, and cultural freedom to the Eastern Bloc. Most living victims of the Great Purge were rehabilitated and resumed normal life, work, and creative activity, while the works of those who had died were republished. Censorship was relaxed to a degree and certain deviations from Socialist Realism tolerated. Contact with foreign academics (including in the Armenian Diaspora) were developed. Significantly, the suppressed nationalism of individual republics and covert discussions of secession, though officially discouraged, were increasingly tolerated now that the widespread use of fear tactics was no longer feasible. In this way, the original goal of creating the “Soviet Man” gave way to the compromise slogan of “Friendship of Peoples” (*druzhba narodov*) of the USSR, implicitly admitting the distinctiveness of ethnicities within the Union while avoiding the term “nations” that implied nationalism and bourgeois divisiveness. Sayat`-Nova became seen as a prime symbol for propagating this new policy in Transcaucasia. Already in the 1950s many important titles on Sayat`-Nova had appeared,<sup>34</sup> including a collection featuring six of Sayat`-Nova’s Azeri songs alongside scores of Azerbaijani aşiqs’, published in 1957.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, Əkbər Yerevanlı’s monumental work on Armeno-Azerbaijani literature connections, *Literary Relations Between the Armenian and Azerbaijani Working Peoples*,<sup>36</sup> one of the few books including a

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<sup>34</sup> For details, see Chapter 1.

<sup>35</sup> S. Axundov and H. Araslı, *Aşıqlar*, Az. SSR Mədəniyyət Nazirliyi Respublika Xalq Yaradıcılığı Evi, Baku, 1957, pp. 60-64.

<sup>36</sup> *Erməni-Azərbaycan şifahi xalq ədəbiyatı əlaqələri*, Haypethrat, Yerevan, 1958.

number of Azeri works by Armenian authors of all times, was published in Yerevan in 1958.

However, large-scale activities always require an occasion, which was suitably furnished by his two hundred and fiftieth anniversary in 1963.<sup>37</sup> The initiator of the anniversary celebration, like T'umanyan's Armenian Writers' Union fifty years before, had a non-government identity more convenient than any official organization, the World Peace Council, at that time a nominally international civil organization promoting peace against "warmongers" and strengthening friendship among all peace-loving peoples—all under heavy Soviet direction. In its heyday in the 1950s and 1960s the World Peace Council organized numerous (if sometimes modest) anniversary commemorations for great cultural figures, most of whom had lived or still lived in Communist or Third-World countries, e.g. the 1968 honoring of five-hundred-twenty-fifth anniversary of the birth of Alisher Navoi, the late medieval poet of the "Uzbek people."<sup>38</sup>

The World Peace Council's decision to honor Sayat'-Nova's anniversary was declared only in 1963. A newly built major East-West boulevard in central Yerevan was named after him and opened on September 27 of that year.<sup>39</sup> A monument was also erected in his honor at the West end of Moskovyan Avenue at the intersection

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<sup>37</sup> In 1962, the musical college in Stepanakert was already named after him. See <http://www.panorama.am/en/culture/2012/05/14/sayat-nova-arcakh/>, as retrieved on Aug. 26, 2014.

<sup>38</sup> The usage of the term "Uzbek people" here is quite anachronistic, since during Navoi's lifetime the Uzbeks were still a nomadic tribe to the North of Transoxiana, in sharp contrast to Navoi's settled background in Khurāsān.

<sup>39</sup> [https://hy.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D5%8D%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%A1%D5%A9-%D5%86%D5%B8%D5%BE%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%AB\\_%D5%BA%D5%B8%D5%B2%D5%B8%D5%BF%D5%A1\(%D4%B5%D6%80%D6%87%D5%A1%D5%B6\)](https://hy.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D5%8D%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%A1%D5%A9-%D5%86%D5%B8%D5%BE%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%AB_%D5%BA%D5%B8%D5%B2%D5%B8%D5%BF%D5%A1(%D4%B5%D6%80%D6%87%D5%A1%D5%B6)), as retrieved on Jul. 30, 2015.

with Maštoc` Avenue (then Lenin Prospect) and unveiled on the same date as the opening of Sayat`-Nova Avenue.<sup>40</sup> Other celebrations filled the year as well. Mass events occurred all over Soviet Armenia, significantly in the Diaspora and in Tbilisi, less significantly in other sites like Baku and Moscow.<sup>41</sup>

Inevitably, academic publications produced to order to coincide with specific memorials are always of variable quality, as Henrik Baxč`inyan notes in the preface to his *Sayat`-Nova, Life and Work*:

It must be said, that especially in 1963, under the torrent of numerous articles, generated from the ferment of the anniversary, Sayat-Nova studies lost its previous scientific seriousness to some degree. And it occurred first and foremost, as stated in M. Hasrat`yan's words, "by those unindustrious and incompetent people, who attempt to make discoveries, to say a new word with one stroke of the pen, by draining the gunpowder of philological ardor, often by thickening the fog of obscure questions."<sup>42</sup>

To balance this, it should be mentioned that the last intensive group of serious studies on Sayat`-Nova from Georgian and Azerbaijani scholars dates from this period. Baramize's complete edition of Sayat`-Nova's Georgian songs,<sup>43</sup> Həmid Araslı's anthology of Sayat`-Nova's Azerbaijani songs,<sup>44</sup> Mirəli Seyidov's *Singer of*

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[https://hy.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D5%8D%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%A1%D5%A9-%D5%86%D5%B8%D5%BE%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%AB\\_%D5%B0%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B7%D5%A1%D5%B2%D5%A2%D5%B5%D5%B8%D6%82%D6%80\\_\(%D4%B5%D6%80%D6%87%D5%A1%D5%B6\)](https://hy.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D5%8D%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%A1%D5%A9-%D5%86%D5%B8%D5%BE%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%AB_%D5%B0%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B7%D5%A1%D5%B2%D5%A2%D5%B5%D5%B8%D6%82%D6%80_(%D4%B5%D6%80%D6%87%D5%A1%D5%B6)), as retrieved on Jul. 30, 2015.

<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately, there is little pictorial or audio-visual record of those events to gauge the scale, and political and artistic connotations of those celebrations.

<sup>42</sup> Baxč`inyan, 1988, p. 17.

<sup>43</sup> Alek`sandr Baramize, *Saiat`nova: K`art`uli Lek`sebi*, Literaturi da Xelovneba, Tbilisi, 1963.

<sup>44</sup> *Sayat-Nova*, Azərbaycan Dövlət Nəşriyatı, Baku, 1963.

*Transcaucasian peoples*,<sup>45</sup> and Əkbər Yerevanlı's section on Sayat`-Nova in his *Azeri-Armenian literary relations*<sup>46</sup> (of which the first three were published in 1963, probably as parts of the academic outpouring dedicated to the great aşıf, and the last in 1968).

The celebrations inaugurated in the 1960s expanded Sayat`-Nova's reputation over the rest of the Soviet Union outside Transcaucasia as well as in the Armenian Diaspora, engendering unprecedented activity in research, art works, plays, and films.

#### A. Literature

Numerous poems by Armenian, Georgian, Azerbaijani, and Russian poets as well as by representatives of other nationalities in the Soviet Union honored Sayat`-Nova. In addition to the contributions of famous Armenian poets like T`umanyan, Č`arenc` and others before the 1960s, the small collection *Sayat`-Nova in the Songs of Poets*,<sup>47</sup> featuring both narrative and lyric poems,<sup>48</sup> contains several non-Armenian and non-Georgian pieces, some of which were probably composed to mark his jubilee.

The Armenian authors represented include a few aşıfs including Jivani, the most accomplished Armenian aşıf of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, who comments as follows:

Sayat`-Novi asaci pes

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<sup>45</sup> *Pevets narodov zakavkaz`ia*, Izd-vo AN Az SSR, Baku, 1963, which is the Russian translation of the same author's *Sayat-Nova*, Azərbaycan SSR Elmlər Akademiyası Nəşriyyatı, Baku, 1954.

<sup>46</sup> *Azəri-Erməni ədəbi əlaqələri*, Hayastan Nəşriyyatı, Yerevan, 1968, pp. 489-526.

<sup>47</sup> G. Ananyan ed., *Sayat`-Novan banastələri ergerum*, Haypethrat, Yerevan, 1963

<sup>48</sup> The three longest examples of narrative poems are Gefam Saryan's *Sayat`-Nova*, Məmməd Rahim (penname of Məmməd Hüseynov)'s *Sayat-Nova* (excerpts), and T`at`ul Huryan's *Songs to Sayat`-Nova*, in Ananyan, 1963, pp. 21-28, 33-37, 48-76.



Azgi mšak ē ergič`ě,  
Hazar c`avov martirosvac  
Čišt nahatak ē ergič`ě.

(As Sayat`-Nova said,  
the singer is the nation's farmer,  
martyred with a thousand pains,  
the singer is the true martyr.)<sup>49</sup>

After Ĵivani, works of a few other Armenian ašuťs, Gusan Ašot, and Gusan Havasi, fill out the collection.<sup>50</sup> Though not as intensively as Č`arenc`,<sup>51</sup> some of the Armenian poets composed a gazel or muxammes, ašuť genres utilized by Sayat`-Nova.<sup>52</sup>

Another literary genre lauding Sayat`-Nova is Zarzand Daryan's two-volume historical novel, *Sayat`-Nova*.<sup>53</sup> The novel sets the ašuť against the background of eighteenth-century history then accepted in Soviet Armenia, exploiting every conceivable plot twist to achieve this. As a result, it highlights issues of class struggle and the struggle for popular liberation from the "backward" Oriental empires of Turkey and Iran, and extols the Russian political orientation displayed by Georgian and Armenian leaders.

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<sup>49</sup> Ananyan, 1963, p. 19.

<sup>50</sup> Ananyan, 1963, p. 89, pp. 112-113.

<sup>51</sup> Apart from the already quoted and translated poem "Eraz tesa, Sayat`-Noven mots ēkav sazě jerin", Č`arenc`'s other works included in this small collection are all beyt's (couplets), in the same style as the full poem. See Ananyan, 1963, pp. 14-16.

<sup>52</sup> For example, Sahak Taronc`i has a "Gazel to Sayat`-Nova" (Gazel Sayat`-Novayin), while Gusan (ašuť) Havasi's song is a muxammas. See Ananyan, 1963, pp. 93, 112-113. Both Hamo Sahyan and S. Taronc`i have poems in which Persian and Turkic loanwords are used more than other works. See Ananyan, 1963, 80, 90. The only exception is Skandar-Nova's "Sayat`-Nova", which he explicitly noted as "in an ašuť style" (ašuťakan), and wrote in imitation to Sayat`-Nova's Tiflis dialect, but without many loanwords. This poem was written on the occasion of the laying of the foundation of Sayat`-Nova's monument presided over by T`umanyan and Bašinjaťyan, i.e. in the 1910s, decades before the event in 1963. See Ananyan, 1963, pp. 84-85.

<sup>53</sup> Vol. 1, Haypethrat, Yerevan, 1960 and vol. 2, Haypethrat, Yerevan, 1963.

It opens with a young deacon from Tiflis in Haġpat monastery telling the boy Arut`in about Davit` Bek and his struggle for independence against the Persian overlord.<sup>54</sup> Fleeing Tiflis to escape King T`eymuraz's wrath for being in love with the princess Anna, Sayat`-Nova takes the golden opportunity to journey to Ganja, Karabagh, and Yerevan and back to Tiflis to learn the current situation in various Transcaucasian locales and meet local Azerbaijanis and Armenians (including the high-ranking statesman and poet Molla Pənah Vaqif, fellow Armenian ašufis like K`ešišōġi, and Armenian peasants) in order to unite as many as possible from these regions with the Georgians to help gain their independence. The bard is even imprisoned by the Persian Khan of Yerevan, but manages to flee with his Muslim companion.<sup>55</sup> Although a Christian, he bears no prejudice against Muslims, as proved by his friendship with Molla Pənah Vaqif, varied poets from Ganja and Karabagh,<sup>56</sup> and, at the very end of the novel, the Persian poet Mirza Ashrafi.<sup>57</sup> In the second volume, Sayat`-Nova befriends Joseph Emin, the British trained pioneer of the Armenian liberation movement.<sup>58</sup> Sayat`-Nova had already made impressed himself upon Prince Erekle for the talent the poet demonstrated while serving in the Persian Nader Shah's expedition against India.<sup>59</sup> By bravely shielding the prince from the Shah's wrath, the bard earns the prince's sincere and intimate friendship.<sup>60</sup> Back in

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<sup>54</sup> Daryan, 1960, pp. 68-71.

<sup>55</sup> Daryan, 1960, pp. 365-506.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid..

<sup>57</sup> Daryan, 1963, pp. 541-556.

<sup>58</sup> Daryan, 1963, p. 224.

<sup>59</sup> Daryan, 1960, pp. 79-80.

<sup>60</sup> Daryan, 1960, pp. 138-141.

Georgia, Sayat`-Nova does everything he can to support the Georgian state of future King Erekle II of Kakheti and Kartli and further the people's welfare and aspirations for independence. He never hesitates to confront and resist oppressive, selfish upper-class figures who disregard the welfare of the Armenian and Georgian peoples (including rich clerics or nobles like King Erekle's consort Darejan and the Grand Prince Abašize), often by satirical songs and witty speeches. His admirable qualities win the princess's love but alienate him from the king and make him too many enemies. These generally rich and powerful enemies' orchestrated attacks ultimately lead to his downfall and enforced entry into a monastery,<sup>61</sup> yet he never gives up hope. Even in Hałpat monastery, he serves the locals with medical care and fights to expel the invading Lezgins, never afraid of offending conservative clerics. Finally, he sacrifices his life when Tiflis falls to the Qajars.<sup>62</sup>

Clearly, the friendship between Sayat`-Nova and Joseph Emin owes much to poetic license, since Emin arrived in Tiflis only in 1763, years after Sayat`-Nova's exile from court. Moreover, there is no evidence in Emin's memoir to support his acquaintance with a bard once favored by King Erekle II.<sup>63</sup> Significantly, however, Queen Darejan, Sayat`-Nova's major adversary, was indeed a powerful opponent of

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<sup>61</sup> The detailed description of Sayat`-Nova's final confrontation with King Erekle II and the latter's order of the poet's exile are presented in retrospective, as narrated by the monk Step`anos in Daryan, 1963, pp. 378-393.

<sup>62</sup> Plots in the third part of vol. 2, the final section of the complete novel, pp. 351-557.

<sup>63</sup> Joseph Emin, *Life and adventures by Emin Joseph Emin, 1726-1809, written by himself*, in 2 vols., London, 1792. However, Melik`set`-Bek did once believe that Sayat`-Nova's fall from grace and exile took place in 1763-1764, in connection with Georgian Catholicos Anton and/or Emin, as quoted from Baxč`inyan, 1988, pp. 308-309. This supposition could well be the source for the plots concerning Emin in the novel. However, Baxč`inyan also mentions that M. Hasrat`yan accepted this supposition, too. This, however, counters Hasrat`yan's argument that Sayat`-Nova must have been expelled from the Georgian court earlier than 1762-1764. See Hasrat`yan, 1963, preface, p. XXIX.

Georgian alignment with Russia and hence portrayed as one of the villains of the novel.

Along with its heavy-handed ideology, other aspects of this novel leave much to be desired. In endnotes to the second volume the author answers two major complaints from readers of the first regarding the inclusion of too many foreign words, phrases and dialects, and unexplained historical events and figures. The author had sought an accurate representation of Sayat`-Nova's language, style, and daily speech in the region, but did so at the price of confusing his readers, unfamiliar with that idiom. As a result, in the second tome the author reduced the frequency of foreign expressions and added explanatory endnotes for some historical events and obsolete customs.<sup>64</sup>

The flaw of over-writing<sup>65</sup> characterizes several aspects of the plot, especially exaggerating Sayat`-Nova's historical role. Examples include his mission to Ganja and Karabagh as Prince Erekle's envoy in order to unify against the Persians both Azerbaijani khans and Armenian melik`s alike, as well as his involvement in Georgian politics throughout the novel, especially his befriending Joseph Emin and shared aspiration for the development of Georgia and the liberation of Armenia. Similarly, at the end of the novel, after decades of monastic life, Sayat`-Nova's fame is still so widespread, that Agha Mohamed Khan, the Qajar ruler of Persia, offers him his admiration, and even wants him to serve at court with the pre-condition of his

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<sup>64</sup> See Emin, 1792, vol. 2, pp. 559-562.

<sup>65</sup> For example, Emin's experience before he came to the Caucasus: vol. 2, pp. 226-249.

conversion to Islam, the refusal of which costs the aged bard his life. The cumulative effect of these exaggerations is counter-productive and merely reinforce the impression that this novel is, at most, of mediocre quality.

## B. Painting

Portraits of Sayat`-Nova<sup>66</sup> depict a wide range of images relating to the *aşuġ* or to Armenian music, art, and culture in general. Research on the identity of the painter of these works has generally pointed to the accomplished Armenian painter Hrač`ya Ėuxkian, who produced a number of works in the 1940s. The nearly identical features of these portraits have become the standard for later painters. However, no portraits of Sayat`-Nova predating Ėuxkian's, nor any notes of Ėuxkian's on his Sayat`-Nova portraits have been come to light to explain the genesis of the appearance he gave the bard such as extant earlier depictions or descriptions of him by his descendants.

In his 1960 portrait of Sayat`-Nova, Ėuxkian shows him wearing a costume essentially identical to the performing suit of Armenian *aşuġ*s of the post-World War II period still employed in performances today. Its design seems to reflect a miniature painted by Nafaş Yovnat`an in 1765, now housed in the Matenadaran Institute of Ancient Manuscripts in Yerevan, depicting a musician, usually identified as an *aşuġ*, in a *majles* or gathering with entertainment.<sup>67</sup> Significantly, however, pictures or photos

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<sup>66</sup> See also the depiction of Sayat`-Nova by Kristin Saleri, an Istanbul Armenian woman painter, as seen on <http://www.kristinsaleri.com/Kristin-Saleri-Bard.html>, as retrieved on Dec. 31, 2015.

<sup>67</sup> Manuscript No. 3628 (other sources cite the number as 4426), p. 12, as quoted from Manya Ėazaryan, *Hay Kerparvestē XVII-XVIII darerum: Geġankarč`utyun*, HSSH GA Hratarakč`utyun, Yerevan, 1974, p. 259. For an analysis of the miniature, see pp. 155-156. However, there she does not discuss the characteristics of the costume.

of nineteenth to twentieth centuries Armenian *ašuġs* like Širin, Ĵivani, and Ĵamali show most of them wearing a *č`oxa* or *cherkeska*, the traditional Caucasian men's coat. The second telling detail is that in the miniature the musician wears a Turkish-style high hat, since covering the head even indoors was customary in the early modern period in the Near East. However, in modern Armenian *ašuġ* indoor performances of individuals, small groups, or large ensembles, musicians hardly wear any headgear at all.

### C. Statues and Monuments

A simple and solemn monument to Sayat`-Nova adorns the corner of Moskovyan and Maštoc` Avenues in central Yerevan, west of the Sayat`-Nova Music School, the Komitas National Conservatory, and the Opera House. The unusual white marble monument by sculptor Ara Harut`yunyan and architect Ėdvard Sarapyan was unveiled on September 27, 1963.<sup>68</sup> Its window-like shape was probably inspired by Sayat`-Nova's Armenian Song No. 41, beginning with the famous lament *Ašxarēs mē p`anĵara ē* ("My world is a jail"), since the word *p`anĵara* translates both as "jail" here and as "window" in modern Persian. Sayat`-Nova's head is carved at the upper left, flanked by three youngsters' heads on the upper right, interspersed with roses in bas-relief, displaying expressions of listening or contemplating, with eyes closed. On the lower left, one of Sayat`-Nova's best-known verses informs the onlooker that "Not everybody can drink my water." Opposite this and slightly higher than the inscription, an ever-running fountain flows.

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<sup>68</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_statues\\_in\\_Yerevan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_statues_in_Yerevan) , as retrieved on Aug. 2, 2015.

#### D. Music and theater

Although less known, musical and theatrical evocations of Sayat`-Nova also exist. The most important expression was an opera appropriately entitled *Sayat`-Nova* written by the major Armenian composer Alek`sandr Harut`yunyan in 1969.

#### E. Cinema

By 1960 the Yerevan Television Studio had already shown a television film on the bard's life, directed by Kim Arzumanyan on a script written by Sayat`-Nova scholar Hrayr Muradyan.<sup>69</sup> The 1960 film features a completely Armenian cast and was probably shot exclusively in Soviet Armenia. It loyally follows the ideological path of "Friendship of Peoples" on the history of Transcaucasia in general and in modelling particular characters. We are introduced to a typical great poet of the people, moving through a plot so standard as to be nearly interchangeable with any Soviet history film on great poets of the people from their respective republics (like Nizami Gəncəvi and İmadəddin Nəsimi of Azerbaijan, or Navoi of Uzbekistan).

Young Arut`in, an apprentice at a silk mill, wants to follow Dosti, the master Armenian aşuġ of Tiflis, for his love of art and antipathy to his merciless employer Avet Agha. But, born poor, he cannot pay off what he owes the latter. Moved by the youth's sincerity, Aşuġ Dosti settles his debt. With this new master, Arut`in wanders across the East and learns much. But his love for home eventually draws him back to Tiflis. In a contest at the Georgian court he overcomes the great Muslim aşuġ<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> For details of this film, see [http://www.arm-cinema.am/am/features\\_and\\_shorts/199.html](http://www.arm-cinema.am/am/features_and_shorts/199.html) as retrieved on Jul. 30, 2015.

<sup>70</sup> Here there might be a mistake in the setting since according to the dialogue, the Muslim aşıq master is playing a saz, but the instrument seems to be a tar in fact.

Fat`ullah and thus becomes the court poet of King Erekle II, wins the love of the Princess Anna, and acquires the professional name Sayat`-Nova (“King of Songs”) from his master. While still in the king’s service, he loyally acts as a “servant of the people” (*xalxi nok`ar*, in his own words) and speaks for the people and the oppressed against the nobles, the wealthy, and members of the clergy in word and deed. He regards himself the equal of the royal family and even dares confront the king, while not recanting his bold affection for Princess Anna. All these activities finally contributed to his downfall and enforced monasticism.<sup>71</sup> But years later, facing Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar’s invasion, he threw off the cassock, leaving the safety of Haghpat Monastery for Tiflis with his kamancha (which he secretly keeps against monastic rules) to stand side by side with the defenders of the capital to promote their morale with his music, and met his death there. The film is as much a musical, replete with Sayat`-Nova’s songs, aŝuf performance, Armenian, Georgian, and possibly other Eastern music, folk songs, and dance scenes. But poorly financed,<sup>72</sup> with its highly ideological implications embodied in its plot and script lines, and workmanlike performances, this film has to be labeled an unexceptional tribute to the great bard.<sup>73</sup>

After the 1960 television film, Paruyr Sevak prepared the script for a short

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<sup>71</sup> In the film, Sayat`-Nova is sent to Haghpat Monastery and becomes Father Step`anos directly after his expulsion from court, different from the fact we have known that he was forced to take holy order and to marry Marmar, years before the latter’s death and his becoming a celibate monk. Furthermore, the setting of the Haghpat plot might be anachronistic, too; since the status of Haghpat Monastery’s architecture and the exact location of its order in the second half of the eighteenth century have caused disagreements among scholars already, as quoted from Baxč`inyan, 1988, pp.88-99.

<sup>72</sup> The battle scenes, with medieval siege tactics and weapons, but no firearms, are anachronistic<sup>72</sup>. Steffen, 2013, p. 121.

<sup>73</sup> The abstract above is based on the film clip on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iX3GKGvxTXQ>, as retrieved on Sept. 10<sup>th</sup> 2015, and Muradyan’s script. See Hrayr Muradean, *Sayat` Nova (kinovipak)*, Tparan Mšak, Beirut, 1960.

<sup>73</sup> Steffen, 2013, p. 121.



documentary on Sayat`-Nova for the jubilee in 1963, directed by Gurgen

Balasanyan.<sup>74</sup> Unfortunately, this was inaccessible to me.

The most famous cinematographic representation of Sayat`-Nova is Sergei Parajanov's *The Color of Pomegranate*. In 1966, Parajanov accepted the commission from Armenfilm, the national studio of Soviet Armenia, to produce a film on the life of Sayat`-Nova, and prepared a screenplay in the same year.<sup>75</sup> The commission proved to be one of the most complicated in the director's career, featuring an extremely convoluted process from its inception until its final release in the process of which the original storyline and its broader symbolism was significantly transformed.<sup>76</sup> The arduous production continued for about two years. After Parajanov removed hours of footage himself, the film was further censored in Soviet Armenia. As the sequence, its first released version in Armenian was premiered in Yerevan, October 1969, but denied public distribution. Only years later Sergei Yutkevich, an old guard Soviet director, prepared its second released version in Russian for public distribution, with some differences from the older released version.

Commenting on Parajanov's central cinematographic perspective, Steffen states: "from the outset Parajanov emphasizes the universal – as opposed to narrowly national – significance of the poet."<sup>77</sup> This tendency is clearly manifested in his last film *Ashik Kerib* (1988), drawn from Lermontov's "Turkish story" and directed when

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<sup>74</sup> Steffen, 2013, p. 122.

<sup>75</sup> Its English translation is available in: Sergei Paradjanov: *Seven visions*, translated from French into English by Guy Bennett; introduction, notes and commentary by Galia Ackerman, Green Integer, Copenhagen/Los Angeles, 1998, pp. 97-138.

<sup>76</sup> See Steffen, 2013, pp. 116-136, 151.

<sup>77</sup> Quotations from both Briusov and Steffen are cited from: Steffen, 2013, p. 123.

the Karabagh question was already escalating.<sup>78</sup> The story of Ashik Kerib is widespread throughout South Caucasia, with many variations, including the Armenian one associated with Tiflis, which Lermontov followed. However, Parajanov set the background as Azerbaijani, shot it in and around Baku and elsewhere in Azerbaijan,<sup>79</sup> and prepared the original soundtrack in Azeri--decisions which may explain its belated Armenian release.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, Parajanov opens the screenplay of *The Color of Pomegranate* with a remark by Valerii Briusov, significant Russian symbolist poet in the early twentieth century and the most important Russian translator of Sayat`-Nova:

Sayat-Nova is one of those first-rate poets who, by force of his genius already ceases to be the property of an individual people, but becomes a favorite of all humanity.

In the screenplay Parajanov offered a loose reflection of Sayat`-Nova's life, following his chronology in the chapters into which it was subdivided with titles "explicitly indicating the contents of each scene."<sup>81</sup> The chapters or episodes roughly include:

The three Transcaucasian peoples' lament on Sayat`-Nova  
The poet's childhood

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<sup>78</sup> A number of books have covered this period. See, for example, Ronald Grigor Suny, *Looking toward Ararat: Armenia in modern history*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 1993, repr. 2006, pp. 195-212.

<sup>79</sup> For example, from my personal experience, many of the murals depicted in the film were taken from the palace of Sheki Khan in Sheki, a small town at the foot of Great Caucasus, in Northwestern Azerbaijan.

<sup>80</sup> Steffen, 2013, pp. 240-241.

<sup>81</sup> Steffen, 2013, p. 131.

His entry into the court as ašul Sayat`-Nova  
The origin of Sayat`-Nova's love with Princess Anna  
Vision symbolizing the Persian invasion of Georgia and Armenia by Nader  
Shah in Sayat`-Nova's dream  
Sayat`-Nova's retreat into monastery  
A night of asceticism and mysticism that befell Sayat`-Nova  
Sayat`-Nova's search for a shroud for the late Catholicos  
Sayat`-Nova's dream about his childhood  
Spring  
Sayat`-Nova's final journey to Tiflis  
Sayat`-Nova's death<sup>82</sup>

These scenes are clearly based on Sayat`-Nova's biography, combined with Parajanov's own inventions. The immediate impression that the screenplay reflects "Friendship of peoples", in reinforced by the director's comments in an interview with Steffen in 1988 on location outside Baku: "The cultures of peoples, especially of neighbors, are vessels for communicating with each other... We, the filmmakers of Transcaucasia, the spokesmen of brotherly peoples, have never filmed a single picture together." There his use of the Russian term, "brotherly peoples" (*narodov-brat`ev*), reflects the contemporary Soviet political rhetoric,<sup>83</sup> as do the peculiar multi-ethnic, multilingual background of Sayat`-Nova's home of old Tiflis and the multiethnic cast of the movie.<sup>84</sup>

Reviewing the screenplay in more detail reveals the very idea of "three" permeating the film and implying the three constituent nations of Transcaucasia: Armenians, Azerbaijanis, and Georgians, although the Armenian and Georgian elements appear more explicitly than their Azerbaijani counterparts. Thus, in the

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<sup>82</sup> Parajanov, 1998, pp. 97-138.

<sup>83</sup> Steffen, 2013, p. 241

<sup>84</sup> For the nationalities of its major actors and actresses, see Steffen, 2013, pp. 124-125.

second scene subtitled “miniature depicting the lamentation of the Transcaucasian peoples in memory of Sayat`-Nova,” three black-garbed mourning women leave three steles, while three young men carry sheep. While the first woman and man are explicitly styled as “Armenian” and the second as “Georgian,” the ethnicity of the third is unstated. In addressing the three stelae, the first is called *xačk`ar* in Armenian; the second *k`va* in Georgian, but the third does not bear an Azerbaijani name. In the portion relating to Sayat`-Nova’s childhood in Tiflis, three religious establishments appear, the Georgian Sioni Cathedral, the Armenian Surb Gēorg Church, and an unnamed mosque, despite there having been more than one mosque in old Tiflis for different Muslim communities or sects. Then the young poet hears three sorts of singing: Georgian songs from Sioni, Armenian chants from S. Gēorg, and singing from the Karaite mosque rather than an Azerbaijani one.

As indicated above, there are a number of significant contrasts between the original screenplay and the released versions of the film. One aspect of this transformation is the almost complete disappearance of the scenes just mentioned featuring representatives of the three Southern Caucasian nations.<sup>85</sup> In fact, the only occasion where the motif of “three” is preserved relates to Princess Anna, who enters a (symbolic) tomb as one line of Sayat`-Nova’s song is heard in each of Georgian, Azeri, and Armenian in turn. Yet, in the released versions, even there the importance of the two non-Armenian languages is much reduced. And besides plot events

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<sup>85</sup> There is more than one released version of *The Color of Pomegranate*, cf. Steffen, 2013, pp. 131-136.

concerning members of the royal family who are obviously Georgian, there are few explicit Georgian elements other than the section on the poet's childhood discussed above. "Muslim" or "Azerbaijani" elements appear even less. Meanwhile, the image of the "invader" towards the end of the film is still quite obviously "Tatar," judging from his fur hat and facial features. Similarly, the peoples' lament and vision of Nader Shah's invasion were discarded, though some motifs of them might be used in other sequences.<sup>86</sup>

The remaining focus on the bard's Armenian context has led some scholars to argue that one of the issues the resulting film presented to critics was its nationalist penchant. In this connection, the opening scene is often referenced, in which the juice emanating from the three pomegranates soaks the white canvas in the shapes of historical Armenia.<sup>87</sup> However, if that were the intent, why did the Soviet authorities leave it in the released edition? In addition to Parajanov's later exploration of Azerbaijani culture in *Ashik Kerib* and Georgian culture in *The Legend of the Surami Fortress*, it is significant that his first feature film, *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, already afforded a colorful (if sometimes fanciful) presentation of the Hutsul Ukrainians' traditional culture. Indeed, that film provoked criticism of Soviet policy in Ukraine and later protests in Kyiv, and involved Parajanov himself in Ukrainian politics as the director of this politically sensitive film<sup>88</sup>. Hence it is important to distinguish his concerns with folklore and ethnography in these depictions of national

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<sup>86</sup> For a comparative list of episodes in the script and two released versions, see Steffen, 2013, pp. 134-136.

<sup>87</sup> As quoted from Steffen, 2013, p. 8.

<sup>88</sup> Steffen, 2013, pp. 73-82.

culture from committed political engagement.

It seems that the main issues of contention with the authorities emerged in the aesthetic realm in terms of his concerted effort to break free from the constraints of Socialist Realism through his audacious presentation of the hero, so unlike that of the conventional biographical film discussed earlier and his embrace of religious and erotic elements. Thus, Soviet film critics like Sabir Rizaev and Michael Bleiman,<sup>89</sup> were more concerned with the film's many failures as a biography. As mentioned before, the screenplay loosely follows Sayat'-Nova's chronology. However, what is more innovative and risky is that, in preparing the script, Parajanov decided "to write the scenario as a 'film poem' and to focus on 'revealing the source roots of Sayat'-Nova's poetry and his times to the era,' rather than recounting a straightforward biography." This stand was controversial for the script editors in both Yerevan and Moscow<sup>90</sup> and resulted in the somewhat paradoxical instruction Parajanov received to remove all direct reference to Sayat'-Nova from the film. Even the title was to be changed from *Sayat'-Nova* to the final version of *The Color of Pomegranate*, based on comments by the Armenian Communist Party apparatus and various members of the creative intelligentsia. As a result, the removal of biographical details and Parajanov's original chapter titles, plus the substitution of new titles written by popular Armenian novelist and short story writer Hrant Mat'evosyan, though they might not confuse an Armenian audience, already familiar with the story, posed a

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<sup>89</sup> Steffen, 2013, pp. 154-156.

<sup>90</sup> Steffen, 2013, pp. 123-124.

great barrier for non-Armenian viewers without that background.<sup>91</sup> This might just be the reason why different Russian titles closer to those in the script were introduced in Yutkevich's version.<sup>92</sup>

Ideologically-tinged criticism mainly attacks the film's "subjectivism," its "disavow[al] of realism" and "archaic thinking," rather than "bourgeois nationalism."

By giving this criticism the title "Archaists or Innovators?" its author Mikhail Bleiman was not only criticizing Parajanov, but the whole "poetic school" of cinematography. Hence "various memos in the film's censorship file complained about its excess of religious imagery, which still abounds in the finished film."<sup>93</sup>

Indeed, the released edition of *The Color of Pomegranate* starts and finishes in monasteries, with about half the story taking place after Sayat`-Nova has entered a monastery, and famed religious establishments like Sanahin, Halpat, Salmosavank` and Axt`ala monasteries in Armenia provide shooting locations. Armenian miniatures illustrating the Bible are what Arut`in is pondering over with much curiosity as a boy. In the episode of king Erekle's royal hunt, the princess stands before a masterpiece of medieval Georgian art, the lavishly detailed Khakhuli triptych, made up from parts dated between the eighth and twelfth centuries.<sup>94</sup> Many props in the episode about the catholicos' funeral were borrowed from the treasury of the Holy Ėjmiacin, Mother See of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Armenian and Georgian chanting and recital of biblical passages, prayers, and bell-ringing enliven the full film. For example, we hear

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<sup>91</sup> As quoted from Steffen, 2013, pp. 131-132.

<sup>92</sup> As quoted from Steffen, 2013, pp. 131-133.

<sup>93</sup> As quoted from Steffen, 2013, p. 132.

<sup>94</sup> Steffen, 2013, p. 150.

the Armenian recital of excerpts from Proverbs in the first episode on the poet's childhood, followed by prayers to St. George in Armenian, while the Georgian hymn *Shen khar venakhi* (*Thou Art a Vineyard*) provides background music in the episode of the royal hunt. In addition to these religious elements in the plot, scenery, props, and soundtrack Parajanov openly treats questions of faith. For example, a tableau in Sayat'-Nova's dream sequence resembles the Nativity.<sup>95</sup> Such an abundance of religious connotations contrasts sharply with the earlier television film which reduced Sayat'-Nova's decades of clerical life to two or three scenes lasting some ten minutes and highlights his unrequited love for Princess Anna and his devotion to "the people."

Steffen also remarks on the erotic scenes, many of which were left in the outtakes, such as most of the male and female nude shots in the Sulphur Bath of Tiflis, Sayat'-Nova's erotic dream in the monastery, and the monk peeping at the bathing Sayat'-Nova. In spite of these erasures, the nude breast in the Sulphur Bath remains in the released version.<sup>96</sup>

In the same way that Soviet censorship proceeded along a paradoxical path by celebrating the bard as a type without specifying him as an individual, Soviet cinema displayed ambivalence toward the artistic features of the "poetic school" which *The Color of Pomegranate* abundantly illustrates. As certain scholars<sup>97</sup> have noted, films of the "poetic school" typically relied on "a slight story, and concentration on folklore, ethnography, exotic motifs and, in general, the visual elements of the

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<sup>95</sup> Steffen, 2013, p. 150.

<sup>96</sup> For these two aspects, see Steffen, 2013, pp. 132-154, *passim*..

<sup>97</sup> All quoted from Steffen, 2013, pp. 17-23.



film ..... These films resemble a beautiful painting, an old print or drawing, rather than the usual ‘filmed play’ ... where a dramatic story is acted on the screen.” Hence Bleiman criticized the common flaws of an “anonymous” school of Soviet filmmakers in connection with heavy use of allegories or parables, a visual style tending toward static images, and a “predilection for ethnographic, exotic-historical material.”<sup>98</sup> As “Parajanov’s most thoroughgoing attempt at cinematic poetry and arguably the most vigorous example of this genre in postwar Soviet cinema,”<sup>99</sup> *The Color of Pomegranate* drew criticism, which ironically attested to its merits and those of the poetic films in general. For example, critic Sabir Rizaev singled out the film’s painterly visual style, described certain shots as “poetry in composition and light,” and asserted that exposure to its “exceptional artistic culture” would “enrich” viewers and encourage them to “relate to the beautiful with greater care.”<sup>100</sup> Steffen argues that poetic cinema tended to become associated with “national” subject matter<sup>101</sup> partially through these same artistic virtues. In the chapter on *The Color of Pomegranate*, he thoroughly analyzes the film and explains many of its Armenian, Georgian, Persian, or “Oriental”<sup>102</sup> elements. But he avoids focusing on the details of the life and works of Sayat`-Nova in his analysis. In this regard, students of the bard should particularly consider the following scenes.

The film's first section covering the poet's childhood presents a scene in a dye

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<sup>98</sup> As quoted from Steffen, 2013, p. 155.

<sup>99</sup> Steffen, 2013, p. 20.

<sup>100</sup> As quoted from Steffen, 2013, pp. 154-155.

<sup>101</sup> Steffen, pp. 2013, 21-22.

<sup>102</sup> As Steffen calls it. See Steffen, 2013, *passim*.

house. In addition to the possible symbolism of dyeing, it highlights the biographical detail discussed by numerous scholars that before becoming court poet, Sayat`-Nova worked in textiles. This point demonstrates how Parajanov represented his hero's biography poetically.

Similar details appear in the film's second section, which portrays Sayat`-Nova as court poet. His principal musical instrument is always the kamancha, while the tar appears rotating behind him only once. Steffen gave his interpretation of the kamancha at its first appearance in the poet's childhood, however, here he interprets the instrument's beautiful mother-of-pearl inlay stands as a metonym for Sayat`-Nova's art, as a piece of art with "its lavishly decorated surface just one expression of the creative spirit of an entire people."<sup>103</sup> However, another aspect of its symbolism is unlocked through the bard's popular song comparing the kamancha to a woman and declaring his love for it. This enriched understanding then clarifies another scene where the princess showers mother-of-pearl on the instrument symbolically. Similarly, in the same scene the princess is tatting lace--another detail from Sayat`-Nova's songs where lace (*İalamk`ar*) functions as a common trope for female beauty. Again, Parajanov may be symbolically representing the poet's life and works through these evocative details obvious to the Armenian audience, if not to others.

Other features of *The Color of Pomegranate* also deserve closer consideration. The first concerns the work's ethnographic quality--an essential element of poetic films embodied in all Parajanov's four completed films. As mentioned above, all the

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<sup>103</sup> Steffen, 2013, pp. 137-138.

plots derive from the history or literature of a given nation, and exhibit scenes characteristic or evocative of its daily life, arts, or religious rites. However, the viewer should not accept every such scene as historically accurate. The Easter sacrifice scene depicting old village women vying together as they skin a sheep and stew the mutton is not an aspect of traditional Armenian custom.<sup>104</sup> Likewise, parents did not stand outside and mark a child's forehead with rooster blood, as Arut'un's parents do. Certainly, the sign of the cross is connected with baptism, but relates to the priest's application of holy oil place. Similarly, in discarded footage, a nun is punished for having affairs by being dressed in white, hung from the ceiling, then repeatedly pulled up and dropped down in a purely imaginary form of ecclesiastical punishment. In brief, those shots do not document, but evoke, folklore in an artistic way. Indeed, it emerges that Parajanov had no background in Armenian folklore, but was a genius inventor of symbols. In a scene retained in the released edition the aged Sayat'-Nova tries to get water from a fountain in a church's wall-niche, only to find it has dried up. According to anthropologist Levon Abrahamyan, who was present at the shoot, such scenes are disconnected from the real world.<sup>105</sup> Nevertheless, the motif admirably suggests that Sayat'-Nova's "water of life" is also drying up. It is obvious that Parajanov was employing imagination, symbolism, folkloric elements, satire, and irony to evoke Sayat'-Nova, and his poetry and life.

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<sup>104</sup> As presented by Levon Abrahamyan during his lecture on the film at the Graduate Seminar of the Armenian Studies Program in UCLA, on Mar. 31, 2015.

<sup>105</sup> Interestingly, one of his most important colleagues, cameraman Yuri Illienko, was unavailable to participate on the shoot, on which, see Levon Abrahamyan's lecture. At the same time, static shots are ubiquitous in Parajanov's all featured films.

Parajanov's use of static shots is also characteristic of the poetic school. But he employs them so frequently in *The Color of Pomegranate* that the motif becomes part of his personal style. The whole film is made up of tableaux, long and short.<sup>106</sup>

Likewise, any dialogue has been replaced by side monologue, or pure mime. In addition, the director relies heavily on what Steffen called the “rhyme” device--a basic tool of Parajanov’s craft, along with symbol, metaphor, and repetition, in which primarily visual or audio motifs echo throughout the film to provide an underlying structure. Steffen cites as an example the recurring visual pattern established by juxtaposing the shot of bleeding pomegranates with that of the bleeding dagger in the prologue.<sup>107</sup> Abrahamian’s presentation about *The Color of Pomegranate* also pointed out its “visual rhyming,” explaining the term more comprehensively than Steffen. According to Abrahamian, the motifs used to form rhymes are often themselves meaningless, such as that of the woman firing a pistol and killing a child above her and throwing a golden ball into the air which occurs in the royal hunt and monk Sayat`-Nova’s dream.<sup>108</sup> Yet the repetition of the same meaningless actions in other parts of the film itself forms “visual rhyming” resembling rhyme in poetry, and perfectly fits the title “poetic film.”<sup>109</sup>

Steffen discusses much of the eroticism in the film, including scenes with both heterosexual and homosexual connotations from both the released versions and

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<sup>106</sup> Levon Abrahamyan’s lecture.

<sup>107</sup> Steffen, 2013, p. 139.

<sup>108</sup> Steffen also labels the tableau of Monk Sayat`-Nova’s dream “difficult to decipher” “as a whole”. See Steffen, 2013, p. 147.

<sup>109</sup> Levon Abrahamyan’s lecture.

outtakes.<sup>110</sup> Yet he does not give much explanation on the reason why erotic scenes are so frequent in the footage. The only remaining erotic shoot, that of the nude torso in the Sulphur Bath of Tiflis, as mentioned before, has been explained by Steffen as the symbol for Arut`in's awakening of sexuality. Meanwhile, Sop`iko Čiaureli,<sup>111</sup> the renowned Georgian actress, played no less than five roles, including "Sayat`-Nova as a young poet, his beloved Princess Anna, ... the Nun in White Lace and the Angel of Resurrection,"<sup>112</sup> the last of whom is "a pale, androgynous youth with a rooster perched on his shoulder."<sup>113</sup> This combination of roles involves both erotic and spiritual connotations, among which homosexuality as hinted from her cross-gender performance would be put aside, since it might relate to Parajanov's own sexual orientation.<sup>114</sup> The combination of roles of the lover and beloved in one actress also implies a union of the two, while the later separation of roles can be regarded as a symbol of their tragical separation. Yet Sayat`-Nova's memory and yearning for her are ineffaceable. The vision of Anna in the outtake of Sayat`-Nova's mystical dream<sup>115</sup> and the encounter in the Convent of Saint Hrip`sime with the Nun in White Lace in search for a shroud for the late catholicos are both proofs of that fact. At the end of the film in the episode of Sayat`-Nova's death, the Angel of Resurrection, whose androgyny and costume all recall the image of Dionysus, "pours a jar of wine

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<sup>110</sup> Steffen, 2013, pp. 132, 144, 147, 152-154.

<sup>111</sup> More commonly known in the Russian form Sofiko Chiaureli.

<sup>112</sup> Steffen, 2013, p. 125.

<sup>113</sup> Steffen, 2013, p. 145.

<sup>114</sup> He was trialed and convicted for homosexuality twice, though the much more dangerous second conviction is rather political oriented and the first denied by himself. In his late years he did have a gay partner Yuri Mgoyan who featured as the hero in *Ashik Kerib*. See: Steffen, 2013, pp. 29, 189-192, 236.

<sup>115</sup> Steffen, 2013, pp. 153-154.

over Sayat'-Nova's chest. The poet thrusts his chest forward as if to savor this one last experience of the worldly senses."<sup>116</sup> In this way, the beloved paves way for the hero's resurrection, for his immortality, and brings to an end to the love theme in the film.

In addition to the motives and motifs of the poetic school and the director's personal style, the Soviet cultural mechanism played a role in Parajanov's principal work. Steffen correctly assessed the intertwining influence of artistic taste and the Soviet bureaucracy:

In sum, the poetic school occupied an ambivalent position within Soviet cinema. On the one hand, both the value that the state placed on "national" subject matter and the relative devaluation of market considerations in a socialist system meant that these filmmakers could launch ambitious studio productions that were also personal and experimental to an extent hardly possible in the Hollywood studio system. Within the Soviet system they could even potentially muster significant resources from the state to realize them. Parajanov, for instance, was able to borrow priceless artifacts from Etchmiadzin, the seat of the Armenian Apostolic Church, in order to enhance the aura of historical and aesthetic authenticity in *The Color of Pomegranate*. On the other hand, these same filmmakers remained vulnerable, since conservative authorities might interpret their "difficult" films as contrary to the principles of Socialist Realism, and since excessive emphasis on national values and imagery risked accusations of "bourgeois nationalism". Furthermore, unlike art cinema or avant-garde counterparts in the West, Soviet filmmakers had to contend with a bureaucratized system of production, distribution, and exhibition that was wholly controlled by the state and lacked alternative venues such as the underground samizdat press for literature. This set of underlying structural contradictions shaped the vicissitudes of Parajanov's career to a significant extent.<sup>117</sup>

In brief, *The Color of Pomegranate* is a film of paradoxes. The Soviet Armenian

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<sup>116</sup> Steffen, 2013, p. 146.

<sup>117</sup> Steffen, 2013, p. 22.

authorities originally aimed at an artistically superior biographical film about Sayat`-Nova and gave Parajanov resources and a fair amount of creative liberty to achieve this.<sup>118</sup> But his personal innovative cinematography often frustrated governmental intentions. This tension invited censorship. And the approved version finally released strayed even further from historical and biographical accuracy. In the end, its depiction of Sayat`-Nova may be compared to a hook on which a coat made from the life and art of the eighteenth-century cultures of Southern Caucasia--real material fabulously embroidered with imaginative designs--has been hung with great artistry.

## Section 5 Recrudescence of Nationalism in the USSR: 1970-1991

After their zenith in the 1960s, commemorations of Sayat`-Nova continued regularly. A village in the Ararat Valley was renamed after him in 1978.<sup>119</sup> His name was identified with a crest on Mercury in 1979,<sup>120</sup> and has become a popular symbol for Armenian artists performing in the Diaspora as well as in Armenia thanks to his increased fame in the 1960s and the intensified rapprochements between Soviet Armenia and the Diaspora. After the State Minstrel Ensemble in Yerevan, a second choir named after him was established in the Eric` Mankanc` Church (Church of the

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<sup>118</sup> On the details of the context of the film's production, the production process and the censorship, see: Steffen, 2013, pp. 116-133.

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[https://hy.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D5%8D%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%A1%D5%A9-%D5%86%D5%B8%D5%BE%D5%A1\\_\(%D4%B1%D6%80%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%A1%D5%BF%D5%AB\\_%D5%B4%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%A6\)](https://hy.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D5%8D%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%A1%D5%A9-%D5%86%D5%B8%D5%BE%D5%A1_(%D4%B1%D6%80%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%A1%D5%BF%D5%AB_%D5%B4%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%A6)) , as retrieved on Jul. 30, 2015.

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[https://hy.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D5%8D%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%A1%D5%A9-%D5%86%D5%B8%D5%BE%D5%A1\\_\(%D5%AD%D5%A1%D5%BC%D5%B6%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%84%D5%A5%D6%80%D5%AF%D5%B8%D6%82%D6%80%D5%AB\)](https://hy.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D5%8D%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%A1%D5%A9-%D5%86%D5%B8%D5%BE%D5%A1_(%D5%AD%D5%A1%D5%BC%D5%B6%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%84%D5%A5%D6%80%D5%AF%D5%B8%D6%82%D6%80%D5%AB)) , <http://planetarynames.wr.usgs.gov/nomenclature/SearchResults> , as retrieved on Jul. 30, 2015.

Three Holy Youths) in Istanbul on April 24, 1972 for both religious and secular performances,<sup>121</sup> while a third was founded on 1 February 1980 in Los Angeles by the Western USA Chapter of the Hamazkayin Armenian Educational and Cultural Society.<sup>122</sup> Likewise, the Sayat-Nova Dance Company of Boston was established in 1986.<sup>123</sup>

Most of these new honors were offered by Armenians exclusively. From the Khrushchev era on, nationalism resurged in the Soviet Union, which the rhetoric of “friendship among peoples” was unable to thwart until it became one of the key factors contributing to the collapse of the USSR. As noted, the gradual demise of Sayat`-Nova studies in Georgia and Azerbaijan is proof of its impact in the academic sphere.

Despite Sayat`-Nova's importance in 18th-century Georgian literature, some Georgian scholars underestimate his contribution<sup>124</sup> and the general status of the ašik tradition in Georgian literature and even attack Paruyr Sevak's methods in Sayat`-Nova studies. Reviewed singly, their criticism may have some merit as the ašik tradition never entered mainstream Georgian literature. Meanwhile, without fluency in Georgian, Paruyr Sevak's study on Sayat`-Nova might need to be complemented. Yet it would be difficult to disagree with Steffen's conclusion that ethnic rivalry, or Georgian nationalism, was the real motivation behind these critiques:

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<sup>121</sup> [http://www.sayatnova.org/tarihce\\_ozgecmis.asp](http://www.sayatnova.org/tarihce_ozgecmis.asp) , as retrieved on Sept. 2, 2015.

<sup>122</sup> As retrieved from their page on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/sayatnovachoir> , Sept. 2, 2015.

<sup>123</sup> [http://www.sayatnova.com/about\\_us.htm](http://www.sayatnova.com/about_us.htm) , as retrieved on Sept. 4, 2015.

<sup>124</sup> As quoted from Rayfield, 2010, p. 135.



At any rate, in case the reader has overlooked the subtext of ethnic rivalry underlying Baramidze and Arveladze's article, they concluded: We believe that the variety of opinions about the issues discussed in this article do not stand in the way of the continuing tradition of Georgian-Armenian literary friendship. Polite academic arguments were and always are the best means to determine the truth.<sup>125</sup>

Aşıq studies in Azerbaijan always emphasize ethnic Azerbaijani aşığı; collections of Armenian aşığı songs in Azeri rarely appear side by side with Azerbaijani aşığı's works. The 1970s saw the only one original discussion about Sayat'-Nova by an Azerbaijani scholar.<sup>126</sup> However, of some fifteen pages the author, Mirəli Seyidov, spent ten<sup>127</sup> exclusively on Sayat'-Nova's Azeri divani Shah-Khatayi songs and mainly on the origin and religious significance of this sub-genre. In the remaining pages, he discussed Sayat'-Nova's mooted esteem for medieval Azeri poet-thinker Nəsimi,<sup>128</sup> in connection with an alleged allusion to Nəsimi in one of Sayat'-Nova's songs, mentioned in Baxç'ıyan's *Sayat'-Nova: Life and Work*, but merely as a reference to Sayat'-Nova's knowledge about Nəsimi.<sup>129</sup> But here Seyidov's claim seems based on Hasrat'yan's edition or Armenian translation,<sup>130</sup> while in the Azeri version edited by Baxç'ıyan, the name Nəsimi did not appear at all. He discusses the parallel between Sayat'-Nova's Azeri song No. 65 and Azerbaijani aşığı Abbas Tufarğanlı's *Bəyənəm*<sup>131</sup>, regarding their views on social inequality (the most original

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<sup>125</sup> Steffen, 2013, pp. 220-230.

<sup>126</sup> Mirəli Seyidov, *Azərbaycan-erməni ədəbi əlaqələri (Orta əsrlər)*, Elm, Baku, 1976, pp. 162-176.

<sup>127</sup> Seyidov, 1976, pp. 163-172.

<sup>128</sup> Seyidov, 1976, p. 162.

<sup>129</sup> Baxç'ıyan, 1987, p. 336.

<sup>130</sup> Seyidov's text and footnotes are not always clear, so I cannot locate exactly which is his first source here.

<sup>131</sup> Seyidov, 1976, p. 173.

opinion in the whole discussion), the ašuf Dosti (spelled "Dostu" here) in Sayat`-Nova's note to his songs as an "Azerbaijani aşıq",<sup>132</sup> Sayat`-Nova's usage of Azerbaijani aşıq Saili's refrains and rhymes (without providing the text of or even a footnote to the *Ağlaram*, which he claimed as Saili's original work),<sup>133</sup> Sayat`-Nova's competence in the composition of even the most difficult aşıq genres, his familiarity with Azeri proverbs,<sup>134</sup> and finally, about later Azerbaijani aşıqs' reverence toward this Armenian master and examples of songs in praise of Sayat`-Nova among Azeri master aşıqs (for which he failed again to provide any reference).<sup>135</sup> Thus the overall quality of the discussion is not very good.

By the mid-1980s Gorbachev's policy of Glasnost lent expression to the resurgence of nationalism in Southern Caucasia, foregrounding ethnic issues among the peoples of the region which found their way into academic circles, too, of which the most prominent examples include the disputes between Armenian and Azerbaijani scholars on the history of Mountainous Karabagh and Caucasian Albania.

## Section 6 The Post-Soviet period (1992-)

In the last years of the Soviet Union and after its collapse, together with renewed ethnic conflicts, nationalism would only strengthen in South Caucasia. Consequently, Sayat`-Nova became even more "Armenian." Yet that might not be purely negative,

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<sup>132</sup> Seyidov, 1976, p. 174.

<sup>133</sup> Seyidov, 1976, p. 173. Baxč`inyan has given his retort to this claim which had been published in Russian in Yerevan, 1963; and now included in this book. See: Baxč`inyan, 1987, p. 335.

<sup>134</sup> Seyidov, 1976, p. 175.

<sup>135</sup> Seyidov, 1976, pp. 175-176.

since communication between the Armenian Republic and the Diaspora intensified after independence, which may have increased his fame abroad.

For example, a ballet named after him by French-Armenian choreographer Richard Mouradian was staged in France in the 1990s, based on Sergei Parajanov's film *The Color of Pomegranate*.<sup>136</sup> Similarly, from 2006 on, the Armenian General Beneficial Union (AGBU) has hosted a regular composition contest bearing his name.<sup>137</sup> Restaurants commemorate him in Yerevan,<sup>138</sup> Moscow,<sup>139</sup> Chicago,<sup>140</sup> Glendale,<sup>141</sup> and even Hackensack, New Jersey.<sup>142</sup>

In 2009 a new monument to Sayat`-Nova was dedicated in Tbilisi below the St. George Armenian Church where Sayat`-Nova lost his life. It is shaped like an opened roll of paper bearing a hand-written Georgian verse, perhaps from the Davt`ar. From the lower right corner, a branch of pomegranates sprouts with leaves and fruit, possibly recalling the film *The Color of Pomegranate* by the famous Tbilisi Armenian director Sergei Parajanov. A saz's neck leans on it, while the instrument's body extends into the lower left corner. This rather abstract monument is easy to interpret and adds to the variety of public artworks in post-independence Tbilisi, together with the T`amada (toastmaster) monument to the west, the statue of Sergei Parajanov

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<sup>136</sup> Details are based on email correspondence with Arcvi Baxč`inyan on July 30<sup>th</sup> 2015.

<sup>137</sup> <http://sayatnovaeng.agbueurope.org/WELCOME.html> , as retrieved on Sept. 4<sup>th</sup> 2015.

<sup>138</sup> There used to be Sayat Nova restaurants in Lyon and Madrid; but both are reported closed on [www.yelp.com](http://www.yelp.com).

<sup>139</sup> <http://sayat-nova.net/> , as retrieved on Sept. 4<sup>th</sup> 2015. Yet there are rumors that it is permanently closed now.

<sup>140</sup> <http://www.sayatnovachicago.com/> , as retrieved on Sept. 4<sup>th</sup> 2015.

<sup>141</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Sayat-Nova-Restaurant-Banquet/121468147868056> , as retrieved on Sept. 4<sup>th</sup> 2015.

<sup>142</sup> <http://www.sayatnovabar.com/index.html> , as retrieved on Sept. 4<sup>th</sup> 2015.

emanating from a wall to the north, and the bronze saxophonist, half-emerging from a wall on Rustaveli Avenue.

A roughly contemporary monument celebrates him in Yerevan at the east end of Sayat`-Nova Avenue on the corner of Xanjyan Avenue.<sup>143</sup> The bronze bust presents Sayat`-Nova holding his kamancha, his head bent in thought. Here his contours are quite abstract in contrast to the earlier monument of 1963. The piece was commissioned by the Yerevan City Hall and the Ministry of the Diaspora and was executed by the diasporan Armenian sculptor T`oros Rast`kelenyan.

From 2012 to 2013 a series of events was held to commemorate the three-hundredth anniversary of Sayat`-Nova's birth.<sup>144</sup> Here the power of tradition manifested itself again, since, as noted already, Sayat`-Nova's exact birth year is disputed by scholars. Although Paruyr Sevak convincingly challenged the date of 1713 in his doctoral thesis in 1966, anniversaries continue to be calculated from that date.<sup>145</sup> In 2014, the festival celebrated its own centenary as well.<sup>146</sup>

As shown from news coverage<sup>147</sup>, the important *Vardaton/Vardoba*

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[https://hy.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D5%8D%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%A1%D5%A9-%D5%86%D5%B8%D5%BE%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%AB\\_%D5%AF%D5%AB%D5%BD%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%A4%D6%80%D5%AB\\_\(%D4%B5%D6%80%D6%87%D5%A1%D5%B6\)](https://hy.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D5%8D%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%A1%D5%A9-%D5%86%D5%B8%D5%BE%D5%A1%D5%B5%D5%AB_%D5%AF%D5%AB%D5%BD%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%A4%D6%80%D5%AB_(%D4%B5%D6%80%D6%87%D5%A1%D5%B6)), as retrieved on Jul. 30, 2015.

<sup>144</sup> See the Armenian embassy in Tbilisi's report about the 2012 *Vardaton/Vardoba*: <http://georgia.mfa.am/en/events/item/2012/05/27/event1/>; also the embassy's report on the conference in Tbilisi dedicated to his three-hundredth anniversary: <http://georgia.mfa.am/en/events/item/2012/10/26/event/>; video record of 2013 *Vardaton/Vardoba*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUz9SpU7dx0>; Armenian embassy's report on the evening dedicated to him: <http://georgia.mfa.am/en/news/item/2013/11/07/Sayat/>; all as retrieved on Sept. 4, 2015.

<sup>145</sup> Though T`ovma Polosyan has taken notice of the scholarly progress, and has decided to celebrate the event continually from 2013 to 2023: <http://www.aravot.am/2015/08/03/598229/>, as retrieved on Dec. 31, 2015.

<sup>146</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uk5FvU7lyws>, as retrieved on Sept. 4, 2015.

<sup>147</sup> As in the previous two footnotes about the *Vardaton/Vardoba* after 2000.

anniversaries in Tbilisi naturally tend to involve both Georgian and Armenian officials as an occasion for showcasing friendship between the two old Christian neighbors despite current disputes between them regarding the situation of Armenians and former Armenian properties in Georgia, Georgian churches claimed in Armenia, the alleged involvement of Armenians in the Georgian-Abkhazian war, Georgia's close relationship with Azerbaijan and Turkey, and Armenia's alliance with Russia. In the sphere of literary studies, publications on Sayat`-Nova continue to emerge in Georgia today.<sup>148</sup> Under the increasingly tense atmosphere of cultural relationships, the Azerbaijanis, though not having directly attacked Sayat`-Nova, have long ceased publication about him, and have even begun to accuse Armenians of plagiarizing the famous Azerbaijani composer Üzeyir Hacıbəyov's melody for Sayat`-Nova's songs.<sup>149</sup>

In brief, Sayat`-Nova's posthumous legacy could be regarded as a true reflection of prevailing trends in political thought in the history of modern Armenia and Southern Caucasia. While the introduction of nationalism into the region fueled the study, appreciation, and promotion of Sayat`-Nova through scholarly and artistic works and cultural manifestations, yet for the same reason--the importance of his identity as an ethnic Armenian—other nations display a reduced interest in his legacy, exacerbated by any discord between Armenians and other nations. Moreover, the influence of nationalism on Sayat`-Nova's posthumous history seems set to continue for the foreseeable future, with all its positive and negative effects. However, there is

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<sup>148</sup> For example, *Saiat`nova*, edited, with Armenian and Azeri songs translated into Georgian, prefaced and glossary prepared by Zezva Medulašvili, Kavkasuri Sakhli, Tbilisi, 2005.

<sup>149</sup> <http://diary-of-suha.blogspot.com/2013/04/sayat-nova.html>, as retrieved on Aug. 27, 2014.

always a wish, or a dream, too cherished to be surrendered, that as Dowsett puts at the end of the epilogue to his monograph, *Sayat`-Nova: An 18<sup>th</sup>-century Troubadour*: “If, as is devoutly to be wished for, unity is reestablished among these nations,<sup>150</sup> Sayat`-Nova, who thought of himself as a builder of bridges, might well serve as patron saint.”<sup>151</sup> An embodiment of this wish might be seen from the title cum symbol of a project focused on collecting music throughout the Caucasus: Sayat Nova.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> I.e., the nations of the Caucasus.

<sup>151</sup> Dowsett, 1997, p. 451.

<sup>152</sup> <https://caucascapades.wordpress.com/the-sayat-nova-project/> , as retrieved on Sept. 4, 2015.

## Epilogue

Though certain connections with the Central Asian Turkic epic tradition or Shamanism may exist, however, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, evidence for a Central Asian origin of the Near Eastern aşık/aşul/aşiq tradition is not very convincing. The existence of various story-telling traditions in the Near East, many of which significantly predated the aşık/aşul/aşiq tradition, especially the `āshiq tradition among the Arabs in the early Islamic period and the difference of theme, composition, and performance between the aşık/aşul/aşiq tradition and the Central Asian epic tradition also render a Near Eastern origin more probable. It is significant that the theory of a Central Asian origin was raised no later than the 1920s, when Turanism was not contained either by Kemalism in Turkey or by Communism in the USSR. In this regard, its emergence might not be completely divorced from political concerns, which may have impinged on its scholarly quality. Similarly, the Sufi or even *gusan* origin of the aşık/aşul/aşiq tradition requires more detailed investigation.

Undoubtedly, the aşık/aşul/aşiq tradition is multiethnic and cross-religion. The findings of Chapters 2-5 suggest that the faultlines creating subdivisions within it fall more according to the languages in which it is performed rather than the ethnicities to which the performers belong. In this way, ethnic Armenian aşul's works in a Turkic language tend to be stylistically closer to the works of Turkic aşık/aşıqs than Armenian aşul's Armenian compositions, which applies all the more to those Armenian aşul's who converted to Islam. Consequently, the Armeno-Turkish aşul songs occupy an

intermediate spot between Muslim Turkic works and songs in Armenian, since they are written in a Turkic vernacular by authors who are Armenian Christians.

As the most accomplished early modern Armenian *aşul*, Sayat`-Nova surpasses other bards in the diversity of genres he practices, the superiority in the rhymes and vocal harmony he develops, the opulence, magnificence and originality of his rhetoric, and the vigor and ardor of his love, as concluded by senior scholars. In this dissertation, his rhetoric undergoes a thoroughgoing investigation. As shown in Chapter 4, the increased frequency of tropes can be regarded as a general tendency in early modern bardic literature, most obvious in bardic songs in Armenian, with Sayat`-Nova at the peak. This Armenian peculiarity is partly attributable to the influence of the more elevated Armenian lyric tradition of *tałasac`ut`iwn*, as reviewed in Chapter 5. Apart from this, the influence of elevated poetic traditions of the area on bardic literature raised here deserves to be explored in much greater depth.

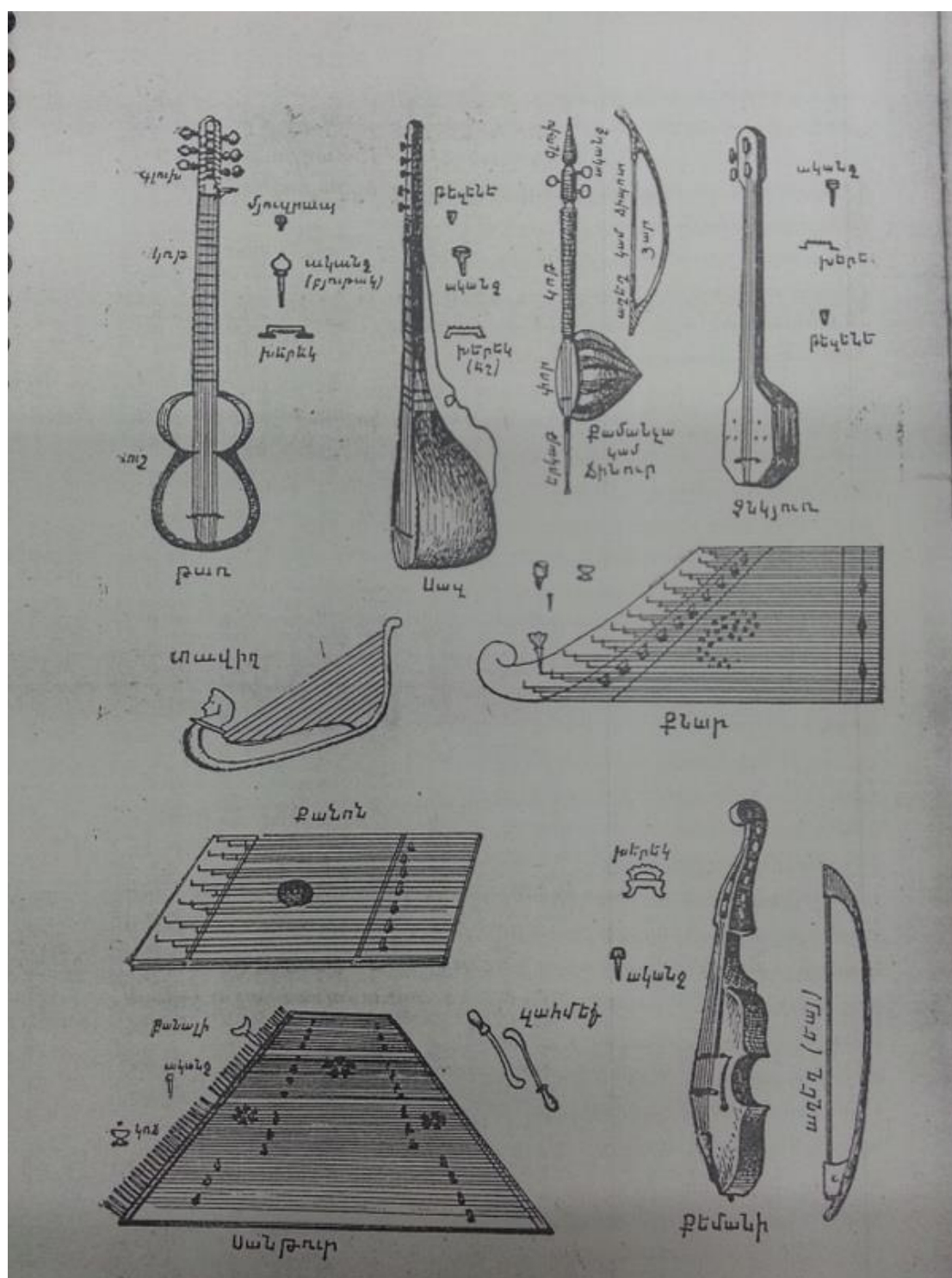
As discussed in Chapter 3, Sayat`-Nova's Armeno-Azeri songs reveal him to be a pious Armenian Christian, quite proud of this identity, but nonetheless one who takes Islamic doctrines seriously. It is striking that his religious views do not prevent him from composing songs and paraenesis in Muslim religious traditions, betraying his powerful empathy. His broadmindedness, as shown in Chapter 6, benefitted his legacy under the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Soviet rhetoric of "Friendship of Peoples", but has suffered outside the Armenian sphere during periods of nationalist fervor whose scale of values is the antithesis of the bardic tradition in according the highest premium to one's ethno-nationalist identity. Still, his multilingualism and religious broad-mindedness, plus his



sincerity in love, and his opposition to injustice, all prepare the ground for him to be the symbol of genuine interethnic harmony in the region.

## Appendices

Appendix A Image of common bardic instruments mentioned in Chapter 2, as included in Garegin Levonyan: *Erker*, Haypethrat, Yerevan, 1963, p. 216:



Appendix B Three of Hrač`ya Ėuxkyan's portraits of Sayat`-Nova:

1. This chalk portrait was painted by Ėuxkyan in 1945 for the 150th anniversary of Sayat`-Nova's death, as the legend states on the gallery which holds it in its collection: <http://www.karllevoni.am/en/artist/hrachya-rukhykan.html> as retrieved on Dec. 21, 2015.



2. This is another version by Ruxkyan, also painted in 1945. The image is downloaded from <http://www.armenianmusicarch.com/sayatnova.html> as retrieved on Dec. 21, 2015.

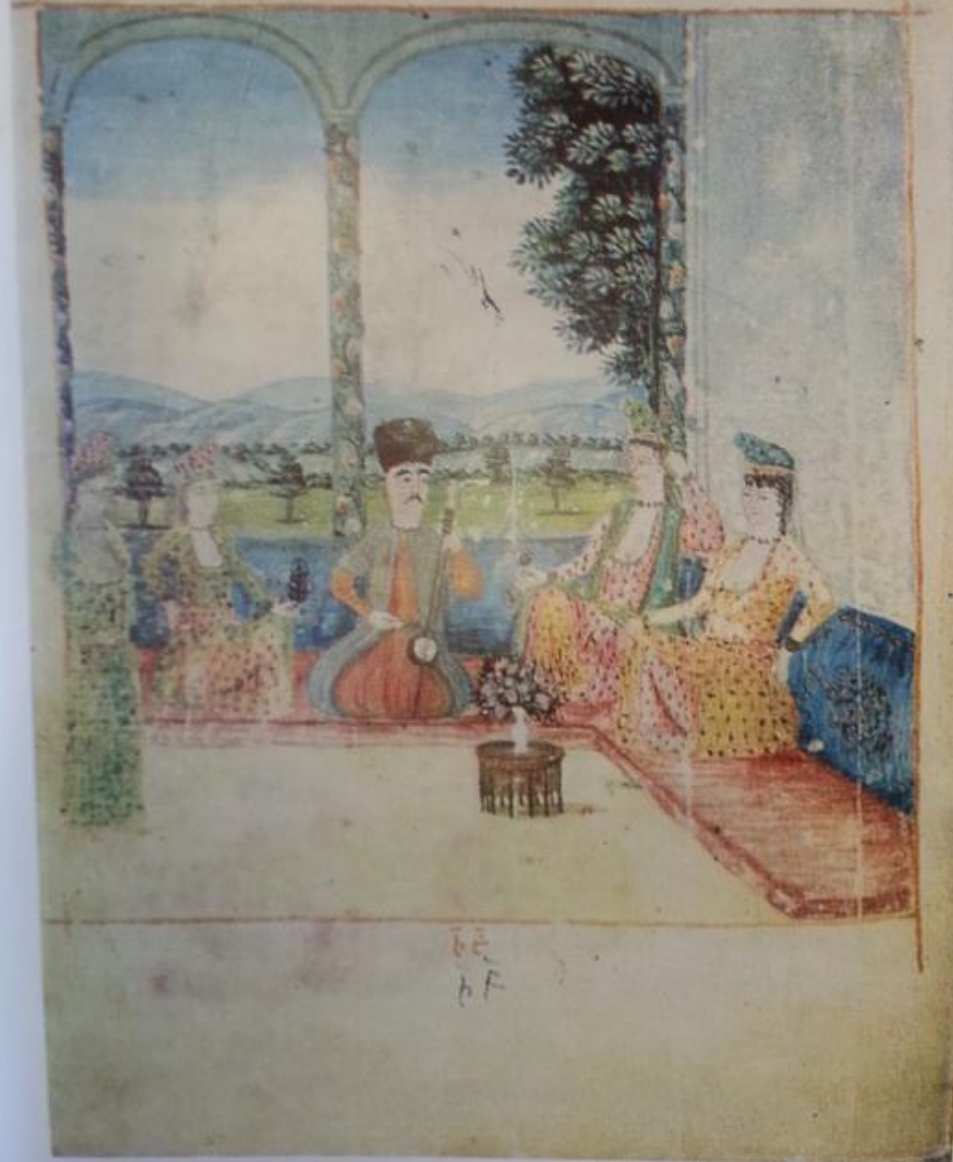


3. This painting was completed in 1963 for the two-hundred-fiftieth anniversary Jubilee. The image is from <http://www.sayat-nova.am/> as retrieved on Dec. 21, 2015, while the introduction comes from <https://www.facebook.com/106421721031/photos/a.10151390677456032.1073741828.106421721031/10151684799441032/> , also as retrieved on Dec. 21, 2015.



Appendix C Našaš Yovnat'an's miniature depicting a Majles, which includes an image of what is supposed to be an ašul playing a kamancha, as in Varag Nersisyan and Henrik Baxč'inyan ed., *Hay mijnadaryan grakanut'yan žanrer*, Haykakan SSH GA Hratarakch'ut'yun, Yerevan, 1984, the third inset between pp. 80- 81:





Նաղաշ Հովնաթան (Երևանի Մատենադարան, ձև. № 4426, 1ջ  
12բ, ծածկ. 1765 թ.):

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